



TECHNICAL SUPPORT GUIDE

FOR THE CREATION AND FACILITATION
OF AN **ECO-PLAYERS' NETWORK**
WITHIN UNESCO
BIOSPHERE RESERVES

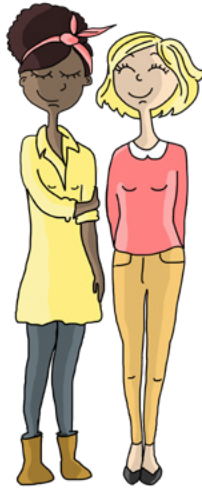


SUMMER-

MARK-

04

FOREWORD



34

FEEDBACK SHEETS

08

INTRODUCTION

35

BIBLIOGRAPHY



26

THE ECO-PLAYERS NETWORK

Methodology

Other key points

36

APPENDICES

62

CREDITS

14

ECO-PLAYER CHARTER

Methodology

Content of charter -

Example of the

« Biosphere Eco-charter »



THIS SYMBOL MEANS THAT THERE ARE DETAILED SPECIFICATIONS.

This methodological guide will be accompanied by a specifications booklet that will detail certain points from the guide or gives some concrete examples and illustrations of the ideas described below.

FOR

WARD

FORWARD

FORWARD

This guide is a proposed methodology for creating networks of stakeholders committed to sustainable development in Biosphere Reserves (BRs) and beyond. It is intended to be adapted according to the local context, the resources (human and financial) available for project implementation and the organisation's affinity to participatory approaches. It provides best practice for creating a charter, based on the feedback of two French and two English BRs.

BACKGROUND TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GUIDE

Within the European INTERREG programme «France - Channel - England», four UNESCO Biosphere Reserves are working together on the project «BCHT: Bio-Cultural Heritage Tourism». The Biosphere Reserves of Brighton and Lewes Downs (The Living Coast), Iroise Isles and Sea, Marais Audomarois and North Devon are visited collectively by more than 20 million visitors annually. Known for their rich cultural and natural heritage, they are affected (positively and negatively) by the impacts of tourism, which are often unknown and not evaluated.

The University of Exeter and Pas-de-Calais Tourisme are supporting the four BRs in the implementation of the project by providing their expertise: The University of Exeter is studying the economic impact of tourism and providing technical support and guidance for research-related outputs. Pas-de-Calais Tourisme is supporting the development of a network of professionals wishing to improve the quality of their offer.

The project also brings together and aims to inform a range of environmental, tourism and business professionals. The participating site managers and tourism professionals are concerned with developing better knowledge about, and management of, tourist numbers. The managers of Biosphere Reserves are looking to improve the resilience of their sites and encourage responsible use by visitors. Businesses in the tourism sector wish to ensure the viability and development of their economic activities and the satisfaction of increasingly demanding customers, while contributing to the conservation of the area's natural and cultural assets.

This reflects the ethos of the Biocultural Heritage Tourism (BCHT) project. BCHT aims to conserve natural sites, to increase the potential of sustainable tourism and to safeguard the heritage, knowledge and cultural practices which have evolved from the links between Man and Nature. The project aims to improve the offer for visitors, to limit the impact of visitors on sensitive sites and manage their negative effects, supporting tourism professionals in linking to the ethos of the project, to involve the inhabitants, civil society and political decision-makers in sustainable tourism strategies.

As part of the project, the 4 BRs developed a collective methodology and common tools, adaptable to many different sites:

A TOURISM MASTER PLANNING STRATEGY AND TOOL

The Master Planning process involves developing an innovative strategy and technical tool, that allows each BR to “choose the best development options, limit the risks in terms of error and inconsistency, and structure the search for a brand image specific to each BR” (trans-

lation of a quote by Y. Delmaire 1989). The tool uses these principles, employing innovative technical knowledge and tools including Geographic Information Systems (GIS) modelling.

The Master Planning process is used to organise educational and awareness-raising activities on the site, the location of infrastructure, services and resources. It seeks to encourage behaviours that will enable greater resilience of natural sites through the management of the space and the activities offered to visitors in these areas. Using this process, the reception/welcoming of visitors is more authentic, less invasive and contributes to biodiversity conservation, which is a factor in the attractiveness of the site for visitors and often the primary purpose of their visit.

A PROGRAM OF ENCOURAGING TOURISM BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT

A network of “eco-player” partner companies, active in promoting the BR and its values was developed with the project partners, consistent with demand and market trends. The network's membership benefits from cross-border knowledge exchange, training and tools to link to the BCHT concept. The four BRs are experimenting with a financial mechanism for voluntary contributions (commonly known as ‘Visitor Giving’ schemes) from visitors to help fund their conservation efforts, which local businesses participate in.

A DIVERSE RANGE OF TOOLS AND FACILITIES FOR BIOCULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM DESTINATIONS

The four Biosphere Reserves use data collected through the Master Planning (1) and work with tourism service providers (2) to identify products and activities that can be developed

in their areas, both indoors (e.g. museum spaces) and outdoors (e.g. supervised visits).

These prototype services/products are being developed to form a new offer from both the public and private sectors. The process of developing these is participatory, involving all the relevant actors, and is transferable to other contexts. The prototype services/products are consistent with the values of a reserve and the evolution of the tourist market (new target audiences, communication channels, new visitor habits etc.). These products introduce visitors to the cross-border values of BCHT through 'immersive experiences' that raise awareness and encourage participation in the conservation and promotion of unique cultures, landscapes and heritage.

These tools can be adapted to other sites with similar issues and to other practices by

tourism professionals who are looking for consistency between their offer and their environment, and to balance the desire to develop their customer base in a sustainable way within a competitive market.

The purpose of this document is to describe the suite of tools and methodology we followed to create a network of diverse eco-responsible businesses (the «eco-players»), including:

- *A common cross-border charter template adapted to the BCHT values, aimed at the most committed companies,*
- *A guide for the implementation of an eco-player network (identification of stakeholders, creation of the network, facilitation of the network) for Biosphere Reserve managers.*



The objective of this guide is to share best practice with Biosphere Reserve managers to help them create their own strategy and the choice of tools to guarantee high levels of quality, participation and effectiveness. The guide also highlights governance structures, conditions and the results that can be achieved.



INTRO DUCTION

UNESCO BIOSPHERE RESERVES: SITES FOR TESTING INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Biosphere Reserves are areas designated by UNESCO to experiment and showcase sustainable development practices at a local level, reconciling the social and economic development of populations with the conservation of biological diversity and, more broadly, the protection of the environment, while respecting cultural values. Dialogue between actors and institutions within BRs is encouraged, including: Scientific research and monitoring, training, education and awareness-raising. They support the implementation of the Sustainable Development goals to which the United Nations has committed itself between now and 2030 (appendixes: SDG sheets).

In 2020, the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) includes 714 Biosphere Reserves in 129 countries, including 21 transboundary sites with new sites.



Being involved in the World Network facilitates knowledge exchange networks that share best practice, disseminate important documents, educational materials and videos, as well as organising conferences and training courses. Biosphere Reserves constitute extensive living libraries of experience in all areas of sustainable development.

A HISTORY OF BUSINESS CHARTERS

The first charter of eco-players in BRs was developed by Man and Biosphere (MAB) France (in collaboration with the Mont Ventoux Biosphere Reserve), alongside several companies in the area who wanted to use the positive image of the UNESCO designation for marketing purposes. After a study of the different options (certification, branding, etc.), under the guidance of Jacques Weber (economist, and Vice-President of

MAB France), it was proposed that a charter was formed where companies could pledge to improve their practices in terms of their sustainability.

This innovative approach was co-developed with eco-players, recognising and celebrating their positive behaviours and actions in helping to achieve sustainable development. It was developed through research (Larade, 2011 [1], Cibien) and practice, through its implementation in the Mont Ventoux, Fontainebleau and Gâtinais and Camargue Biosphere Reserves, within the framework of a LEADER cooperation project. Other French Biosphere Reserves have subsequently committed themselves to this process (Gorges du Gardon, marais Audomarois, Mont Viso) or are planning to do so soon (Îles et mer d'Iroise, Vallée du Fango), with MAB France overseeing progress. The approach has also inspired several sites abroad, such as the Isle of Man Biosphere Reserve (England), the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Reserve (Scotland) and the Dublin Bay Biosphere Reserve (Ireland).

WHAT IS AN ECO-PLAYER NETWORK ?

People who sign a Biosphere Reserve charter are referred to as eco-players. They may be individuals, businesses or organisations / legal entities who wish to have their involvement in the sustainable development of their area recognised and who therefore make commitments towards this aim.

As a result of the coordination and facilitation of the Biosphere Reserves, these eco-players are brought together into local networks, which in turn form larger national and international networks. As eco-player charters are

part of a territorial approach, they concern all sectors of activity (not just tourism) in order to create a diverse and representative network of actors. These partners create synergies to educate visitors and increase their environmentally friendly activities.

These charters provide a framework for individual memberships, but they also carry a more collective dimension. The people who sign the agreement are part of a process addressing the specific challenges of the area and they sign commitments encouraging them to participate in sustainable development, to accelerate the transformation of our societies towards a more ecologically rich world, but also to become ambassadors of the Biosphere Reserve. They are therefore joining a group of actors who share the same values.

WHY CREATE A NETWORK OF ECO-PLAYERS ?

This is a question that Biosphere Reserve managers commonly face, both when applying for funding, seeking support, communicating with local stakeholders, and recruiting potential eco-players. The sustainability of a BR depends on the sustainability of the activities that take place within it, therefore a holistic approach is required. The creation of a network of eco-players allows each one to show their links to the BR and to share their ideas, experiences and marketing tools

together. Under the image of UNESCO and their Biosphere Reserve status, the businesses collectively contribute towards environmentally friendly actions, create links, add value to their products and increase community cohesion. This approach has advantages both for the Biosphere Reserve and for the local stakeholders who decide to commit themselves to its values.



(1) BRs can choose to use other terms instead of eco-player, e.g. 'Biosphere Business Partners' as in North Devon BR.

MEETING WITH ECO-PLAYERS



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS FOR THE BIOSPHERE RESERVE?

Eco-player networks enable Biosphere Reserves to share responsibility with groups of ambassadors and natural areas managers. Through regular meetings and with effective facilitation, the members become committed and united in communicating their passion for improving the quality of life in their region. They then increase the visibility and popularity of the Biosphere Reserve and its actions. These networks have a culture of sustainability that is beneficial and can form a driving force for the socio-ecological transition of the area. Through these networks, Biosphere Reserves mobilise new local partners who then participate in the sustainable development of the area. Networks create synergies between different socio-economic stakeholders and contribute to strengthening the area's social fabric.

By working with local stakeholders and cultivating this proximity, Biosphere Reserves are also experimenting with new participatory management methods.

- **A shared programme** of tourist offers, immersive experiences and pooled actions;
- **Acknowledgement / recognition** of local environmental expertise (e.g. wildlife monitoring);
- **Training and events** aimed at local businesses - themes to be chosen by eco-character members;
- **Free business / marketing advice** linked to coaching activities; and
- Become involved in a **Voluntary Tourism Revenue Reinvestment (VTRR) scheme** (also known as a Visitor Giving scheme) to help raise funds for the BR and have a say in how the money is spent.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS FOR THE SIGNATORIES?

People who sign the Biosphere's charters get several benefits (which may vary across different contexts):

- **More visibility and marketing** as a sustainable development actor of the BR (listed on the BR website, social media, flyers, etc.);
- **An adaptable logo**, for use in their marketing campaigns, products and services (use existing logo where feasible);
- Participation in a **partner network** sharing the same values;





ECO-PLAYER CHARTER

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the charter is to encourage the stakeholders of the area to share the values and objectives of the Biosphere Reserve, to create a sense of pride/ownership and to promote the cultural and natural assets of the Biosphere Reserve.

PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION

This section describes the main principles for the creation and implementation of an eco-player charter in the participating Biosphere Reserves. The objectives of the charter were defined in consultation with the French and British BR partners of the BCHT project. Based on the findings of this process, each Biosphere Reserve adapted the approach to suit their local contexts and needs. The charters were built locally with the eco-players of the area. It is within the framework of the charter that candidate eco-players will define their commitments for their own activity. The implementation process will be based on the principles of charters developed by MAB France, with the following guidelines (MAB France 2016):

1 Open membership

The charter is open to any individual, business, or legal entity that is within, and has a sense of belonging, to the Biosphere Reserve. Any type of stakeholder can therefore become a signatory to the charter.

2 Open definition of commitments

After adhering to the general guidelines of the charter, each candidate eco-player freely defines their own commitments, within the framework of criteria defined during the initial construction of the charter (*Page 19- Content of the Biosphere Charter*).



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These precise commitments are made for a period of time fixed by the Biosphere Reserve management.

 **SHEET 1 2 3**

3 Sponsoring

Sponsorship of new eco-players is required by a current charter member in the same sector with a strong commitment to sustainability. This helps build partnerships and ensure commitments are fair and achievable. The BRs and eco-player networks should therefore encourage sponsorship, while recognising that this may be more difficult at the beginning of the process.

4 Signing by a representative

The documents (charter, and commitments, if applied) are signed by the eco-player,

by the Manager of the BR or their representative, and by the President or Chair of MAB UK (electronically or in person), if applicable.

5 Public declaration of commitments

The eco-players are welcomed into the network at a public ceremony to sign the charter and make commitments. The commitments will be reinforced through this process, and this public formalisation gives them more credibility. Alternatively, if the eco-charter process has just started and needs embedding first, a BR may decide not to enforce any commitments, at least initially. In this scenario, a suitable networking and positive reinforcement process will be set up.

6 Transparency

The commitments made by each of the eco-players in the network must be easily accessible and visible to anyone. For example, they could be listed on a dedicated website. They can also be displayed in the eco-player’s business premises or venue, to encourage transparency and public awareness.

7 Self-evaluation

At the end of each period (generally every 2 or 3 years), the eco-players are invited to assess the progress of their commitments. This evaluation is done by the eco-players themselves. Another option is for other eco-players to peer-review the commitments.

8 Vigilance

The charter is a common resource. Each of the signatories is a contributor (through their commitments), but also a custodian. If the values of the charter are not respected, all members of the network risk being discredited. Collective vigilance and support from the network will prevent this from happening.

Eco-players should be supported and assisted in fulfilling their commitments, with opportunities for peer review and celebration of best practices. However, in order to guarantee the continued quality of the charter, Biosphere Reserves reserve the right to sanction possible offenders, and revoke the charter status of participants in the case of non-compliance with its principles.

STRUCTURE

The charter certificate is the document available for each eco-player to display (in their reception area, on their website, on printed marketing materials, etc.). It is a short and simple document, which includes the essential elements of this partnership with the Biosphere Reserve:

- A reminder of the principles of the MAB programme
- A few sentences about their particular Biosphere Reserve.

This generic section is followed by a section specific to the eco-player:

- The eco-player's commitments
- Signatures of BR representatives (or President or Chair of MAB UK, if applicable).

The commitments will be tailored to the characteristics of the Biosphere Reserve and the sectors of activity. Each BR will add roughly 3-5 applicable sectors, such as; visitor attractions, accommodation providers, agriculture etc.



STYLE AND COMMUNICATION

The charter should use easy-to-communicate language (no technical jargon) and remind eco-players and visitors of the objectives and values of Biosphere Reserves, as well as their contribution to the local economy. The second section will be personalised for each eco-player and will include specific commitments.

The document should be produced in a suitable format, with an attractive graphic design so that eco-players can use it as an awareness-raising and communication tool (see flyers).

PARTICIPANTS

The main participants are businesses, particularly Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and Micro businesses (associated with rural economies), but the charter should also be inclusive and suitable for a range of organizations (public sector organisations, charities, schools etc.). The objective is to bring together different actors from across the BR to work in collaboration and to change beha-

viours to limit the impacts of their own activities and the negative effects of over-tourism.

UPDATE

The charter should be re-evaluated periodically to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the eco-players and that it reflects the identity and the aims of the Biosphere Reserve.

The evaluation concerns the content of the charter (territorial issues, relevance of the commitments, etc.) and its operating model. For example: Does the network's Facilitation Committee function well? Is the frequency and content of meetings/training events suitable for eco-players? Should the network's membership rules be adapted? All these questions are put forward to the eco-players and their proposals should be validated by a vote and with the agreement of the BR's coordinators.



SHEET 4



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IMPLEMENTATION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE CHARTER

Implementation Best Practice

The following are recommendations, based on the experience of the Biosphere Reserves so far, to ensure the sustainability of the charter and the eco-players' involvement.

Keep it simple

The MAB programme, Biosphere Reserves, eco-player charters (etc.) are complicated concepts that the general public may find difficult to understand. Therefore, it is necessary to have a clear communication strategy which answers, «What is the point of the eco-charter?» rather than, «how does it work?». The communication toolkit produced by the MAB Secretariat (see *UNESCO Toolkit*) could be used as a basis for this.

Encouraging the eco-players' participation

By co-creating the charter with the involvement of many stakeholders and then allowing them to personalise their commitments, we encourage the eco-players to take ownership of the tool and to promote it. The links forged with these local players and the maintenance of the network through regular communication contribute to making the eco-players ambassadors for the BR. The eco-player network contributes to the Biosphere Reserve's project to raise awareness of sustainable development.

Create partnerships

The Technical Advisory Committee, which ensures the effective functioning of the charter and the network, should be composed of local actors, non-governmental organisations

(NGOs), associations, experts, etc. They should meet once or twice a year and the Biosphere Reserve thus develops its partnerships with the stakeholders of the area. A link can also be made with other accreditation schemes and labels that already exist to make the charter a springboard towards more formal certification for the most exemplary eco-players. It is also possible to include branded or labelled service providers in eco-player networks, taking into account their commitments in their entire field of activity (rather than just relating to one product), as these may facilitate area cohesion beyond individual sectors or activities.

Local eco-player network facilitation

The formal methodology was created at the national level, but this toolkit allows for a personalised approach to implementation at the local level. To ensure the effective facilitation of the charter and network, the designation of a contact person in the Biosphere Reserve who is responsible for its implementation is essential. This person's role will be to support the eco-players during the process of creating the charter, helping to formulate their commitments and then for the facilitation of the network. Without facilitation, the network is very likely to lose its meaning, its effectiveness and attractiveness.

OTHER LESSONS FROM BEST PRACTICE

Explain the approach: progress and improvement

Eco-player charters are not brands or labels aimed at particular products or services. This is an important point to highlight when candidates come forward to join the network, and especially during reflections on the commitments. Commitments should not focus on practices that are already being implemented by the businesses, but rather as new means of

improvement. They can receive advice and guidance from the community, network or Biosphere on how to make these improvements.

The commitments are part of a process of progression, to collectively move the area towards a common goal. This is similar to the evaluation of the charter by Biosphere Reserves - in that it will not be the results that will be judged, but the means used to achieve this. Moreover, the whole structure is committed to respecting the environment and the MAB principles. This concept is not easy to grasp for economic actors who are used to being judged on their economic business practices. It is for this reason that the support of the BR facilitator, especially when drafting the commitments, is essential.

Cultivate a welcoming atmosphere

The eco-players will meet regularly, mainly professionally but sometimes at social events. They may also be called upon to advise each other and to guarantee that all eco-players who have signed respect their commitments. In order to encourage a convivial atmosphere in the network and to enable the eco-players to work together to feed off each other's progress, the facilitator will need to ensure an ethos of kindness in all members. Criticism is welcome, provided it is constructive and that eco-players feel supported and advised rather than judged by their peers. The group cohesion is also an important factor in making training events and other meetings effective. Meaningful bonds between network members will hopefully lead them to organize informal meetings, outside of activities proposed by the Biosphere Reserve.



THE BIOSPHERE CHARTER



WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE BIOSPHERE



SHEET 5

CONTENT

The Biosphere Reserves aim to fulfil three complementary and interconnected functions:

- **Conservation:** protect biodiversity, landscapes and cultural diversity;
- **Local development:** favour economic and human development that is environmentally and socially sustainable and culturally appropriate;
- **Scientific monitoring, raising awareness and education:** better understand in order to better protect and to understand the interactions between social and ecological systems.

In order to achieve these aims, the Biosphere Reserves agree to steer several projects, including:

- To protect and promote environmental and cultural heritage in their areas
- To improve the environmental viability of businesses and collectives
- To support the local economy, social cohesion and community well-being

The commitments

Large categories have been established to guide the eco-players and nurture their reflection on the commitments that they may make, in order to contribute to the BR objectives and respond to the local issues. Each eco-player is therefore free to use this table if required and to personalise their commitments.

CONSERVATION

GOALS...

C1 : Protect and promote the biodiversity, landscapes and natural resources of the Biosphere Reserve.

C2 : Protect and promote the cultural heritage and distinctive charm of the Biosphere Reserve

C3 : Minimise the environmental impact

I AM COMMITTED TO...

C1 : Implement land/garden management practices that aim to protect fauna (installing nesting boxes for birds or bats, etc.).

For site managers:

C1 : For tourist sites, manage and modify movement, activities and behaviours in order to minimise or reduce the impact of visitors on sensitive zones and sites and inform visitors of alternative, less sensitive sites/times (including low season, avoiding bird mating season, etc.).

C2 : Protect and promote local expertise and cultural heritage by offering visitors the chance to get involved and learn about local cultural practices or by organising events that promote local culture.

C3 : Offset the damages from activities that are harmful to the environment - for example, planting additional trees if a large amount of paper is used.

C3 : Reduce energy and water consumption, produce renewable energy, use alternative technologies, reduce waste and increase recycling.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

GOALS...

D1 : Engage with local businesses and support them in promoting sustainable development and sustainable products

D2 : Improve the quality of tourism-related experiences by building on the distinctive charm and environment of the Biosphere Reserve

D3 : Contribute to the well-being of local communities within the Biosphere Reserve

I AM COMMITTED TO...

D1 : Engage with as many local businesses as possible that operate responsibly in terms of the environment and society.

D1 : Promote local, sustainable products.

D2 : Develop high-quality, immersive tourist experiences that integrate with local environmental and cultural heritage.

D2 : Improve individual efforts by combining several activities and working in collaboration with other businesses and organisations.

D3 : Promote and offer sustainable visiting opportunities that strengthen community infrastructure, social cohesion and well-being, including tourist activities outside of high season and promoting soft modes of transport (bikes, etc.).

D3 : Incorporate or promote collective, therapeutic and well-being activities.

For site managers:

D3 : Improve site accessibility for all members of the public (especially persons with reduced mobility).

AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

GOALS...

A1 : Raise awareness of the Biosphere Reserve environment, the impact of tourism and the advantages of sustainable use

A2 : Engage with the network signatory members of the 'Biosphere Charter' and share knowledge and best practices.

I AM COMMITTED TO...

A1 : Inform visitors of the impact of tourism and the fragile nature of the local environment.

A1, A2 : Educate, monitor and communicate on key themes relating to sustainability and the biosphere (biodiversity, reducing the impacts of tourism, sustainable practices, etc.).

A1, A2 : Support the improvement of sustainability by providing data for research.

A2 : Promote and maintain the eco-player network.

A2 : Promote and participate in events organised by the BR.

A2 : Facilitate knowledge exchanges and share best practices with the other network members.

For site managers:

A1, A2 : Monitor the state of biodiversity and the impact of tourism on the environment and share associated knowledge.

A2 : Support and assist the eco-players in achieving their aims.

A1, A2 : Offer training and knowledge exchange opportunities to local businesses, visitors and inhabitants on the issues of the BR territory.





THE ECO-PLAYERS NETWORK

Once the charter has been signed, the eco-players join a network of likeminded people who have also demonstrated their desire to promote and protect the landscapes, culture and heritage of the area.

The Biosphere Reserve's leadership in the network helps to perpetuate and maximize this mobilisation: the eco-players meet regularly, which creates synergies for the area. They are trained in the Biosphere Reserve concept and understand its objectives, values and issues. They then become ambassadors of the MAB programme values and the network can become a communication tool for the Biosphere Reserve.

Based on Biosphere Reserves' feedback and MAB expertise, a methodology has been devised to help managers run their network efficiently. These general recommendations and facilitation techniques must of course be adapted to the local context. These guidelines act therefore as best practice, and could be adapted for each BR.

METHODOLOGY

CREATING A SUCCESSFUL NETWORK

Starting from its creation, the facilitation of a network of eco-players must be seen as involving a process of consultation. In order to ensure increased interest in the network, it is helpful to create a feeling of participants' belonging and attachment to the network. The first workshops should therefore highlight the common interests of the different participants in the conservation of the area and allow a project for the Biosphere Reserve to emerge, a common vision that will then guide their commitments and their personal objectives in contributing to it.

SHEET 7

NETWORK SUSTAINABILITY

Best practice

Effective network facilitation is key for its sustainability: if the eco-players no longer meet or if they are disconnected from the Biosphere Reserve, they will very likely become demotivated and lose interest in the network. This is why human and financial resources are crucial, particularly for the organisation and facilitation of events dedicated to eco-players. For a functioning and dynamic network, the following best practice is recommended:

- *At least one annual meeting with all eco-players who have signed the charter;*

SHEET 4

- *One training session per quarter on themes relevant to the challenges of the area and the eco-players activities (e.g. plants and local species for gardens, waste treatment and recycling, new ITC tools). The themes can be discussed with the eco-players to best meet their needs;*

SHEET 8

- *A major festive event every year to promote the eco-players network to the general public and highlight their commitments;*

SHEET 9

- *More informal and social meetings (around a coffee, drinks etc), to encourage the participants to network freely and bond;*

SHEET 10

It is also possible to organise field trips to other Biosphere Reserves, or even a meeting with other eco-player networks, in order to enhance and reinforce the feeling of belonging to a global BR network.

SHEET 11

Empowering the network of eco-players, for example through forming an association, is one avenue to explore. This is a solution envisaged to lighten the work of Biosphere Reserve coordinators and empower the people who have signed the charter. Nevertheless, a contact person should be kept among the members of the association, so as not to lose contact with the BR. There are several risks (and benefits) inherent in this process that require consideration:

- *Eco-players negatively transforming the philosophy of the approach without consulting the Biosphere Reserve;*
- *Links and relationships between local actors deteriorating without regular meetings between the network members and the BR facilitators;*
- *An association may allow the opportunity to experiment with innovative and original animation tools, specific to the Biosphere Reserves,*

which participate in their mission to animate and accompany areas towards the ecological and social transition. However, any innovation still needs to adhere to the BRs values and mission and there is a risk that experimentation can depart from these.

GOVERNANCE OF THE NETWORK

Best practice

SHEET 12

The best practice that has arisen from developing charters across France and England points to one structure to help monitor, organise and facilitate the network of eco-players. This is the Monitoring Committee. The name can be altered to suit different languages.

Biosphere Reserve managers are responsible for:

- The support of applicants in the preparation of their charter application.
- Supporting eco-players to fulfil their commitments (organizing training, information meetings, etc.).

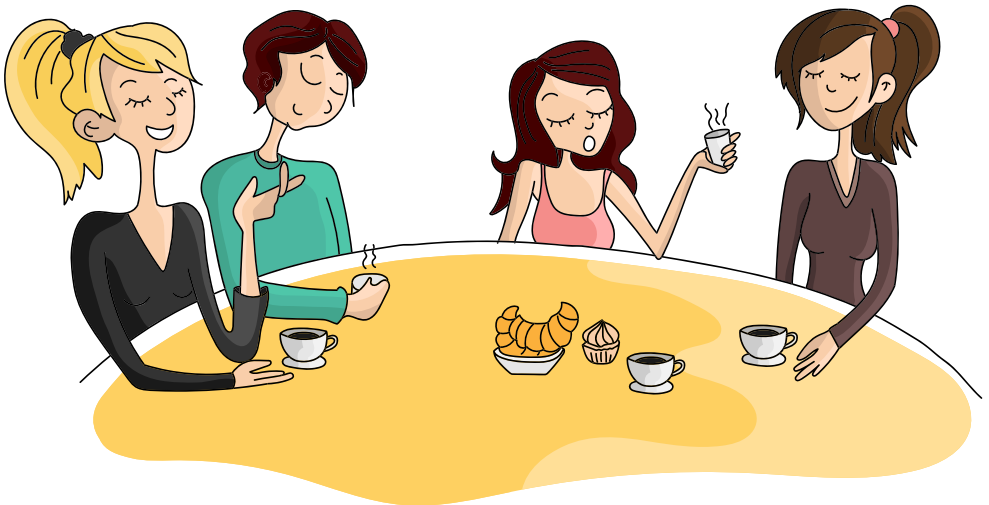
- Monitoring and accompanying the fulfilment of each eco-player's commitments each year (or 2-3 years as required).
- Presenting an assessment of the network's activities (workshops, actions carried out by its members, results of follow-ups and checks) each year at the General Assembly of eco-players.
- To lead the Monitoring Committee of the Network of Eco-players.

The Monitoring Committee of the Network of Eco-players

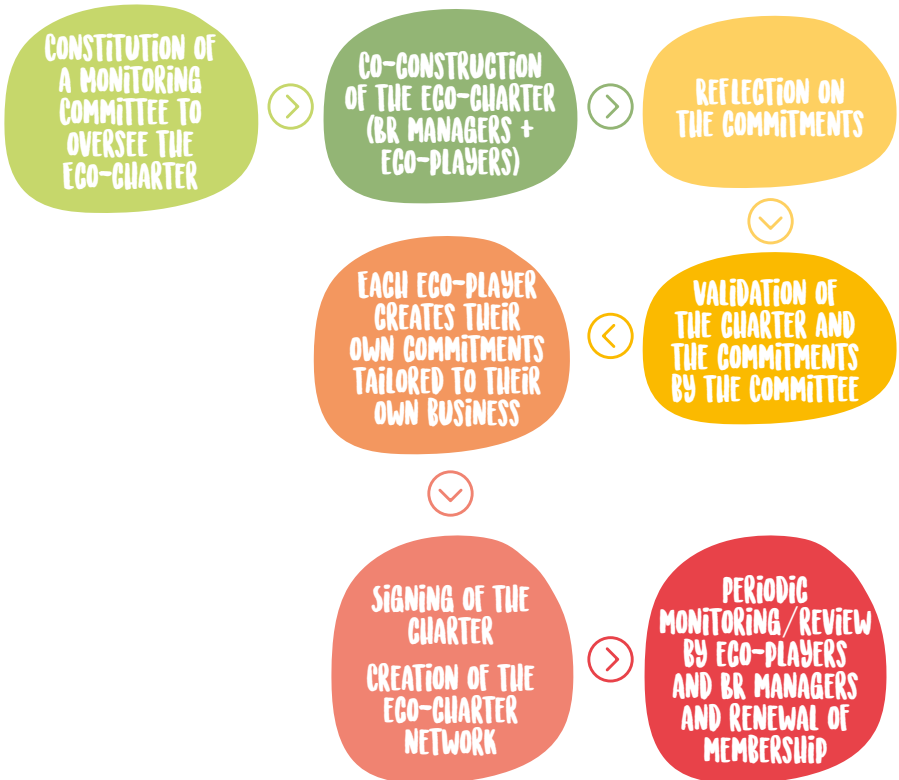
The Monitoring Committee is responsible for monitoring and accompanying the fulfilment of each eco-player's commitments. This is an ongoing process, with eco-players being reviewed every 1-3 years (described in more detail in the next section).

Composition of the Monitoring Committee

The composition of the Monitoring Committee must be representative of the environmental, social and economic aspects of the Biosphere Reserve.



Process of forming a network and charter



It can be changed over time. The decision to amend and the amendments themselves are conditioned on a favourable opinion from the Monitoring Committee as well as a favourable opinion from the General Assembly of the members of the Biosphere Charter (by an absolute majority).

Those who may be involved in the Monitoring Committee for example are: elected representatives of eco-players, representatives of destination management organisations, Chambers of Commerce and Industry, local conservation associations, etc.

THE COMMITTEE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- **Reviewing applications**

After a candidate has submitted their application, the BR managers pass comment on the documents and may deliver a favourable or unfavourable opinion. When examining the applications, the Committee assesses the consistency of the selected commitments with the values and missions of the Biosphere Reserve and with the charter objectives. It also verifies that the applicant has set achievable deadlines for fulfilling their commitments and ensures their feasibility.

- **Following up on commitments**

The Committee members examine and give an opinion (favourable, reserved or unfavourable) on the follow-up assessment files sent to them by the BR managers.

- **Validating charter's amendments, its regulations, the conventions and the composition of the Monitoring Committee**

BR managers are consulted on any amendments to the charter; they shall be subject to the Committee's favourable opinion. They review the regulations, conventions and the composition of the Committee. The decision to amend (and the amendments themselves) are conditioned on a favourable opinion

from the BR managers as well as a favourable opinion from the General Assembly of the members of the Biosphere Charter (by an absolute majority).

Best practice

The Process of Monitoring the Charter and Eco-player's Actions

Every two to three years (to be adapted locally), the Monitoring Committee must decide whether an eco-player can continue to be associated with the charter, based on whether they completed their commitments. To do so, the group evaluates the signatory's monitoring report and their new commitments for the upcoming period.



© PNRCMO - RBMA

1 Monitoring Report

The eco-player must complete the necessary documentation at the end of each period, explaining the progress they have made towards their commitments, whether they succeeded in reaching these goals, and providing evidence that they have completed their commitments. Eco-players are expected to self-monitor their progress throughout the time-period and will attach supporting documents (e.g. photos, invoices) to the form as appropriate. They take stock of the actions they have undertaken during the year and provides the supporting documents requested.

The eco-player will send this assessment report to the Monitoring Committee. The members of the Monitoring Committee can comment on the assessment, communicating ideas and possible improvements to the actor. They may express reservations about the assessment; in this case the eco-player must provide additional explanations.

2 Follow-up interviews

The eco-player is then invited to an interview with members of the Monitoring Committee to look at each commitment and check whether they have been kept. If a commitment has not been fulfilled, the eco-player will explain the reasons why. The Committee members can take note of these and add them to the report.

In order to make the interviews more enriching and maximise knowledge exchange, other members of the network can be invited to the interview. They will give their opinion (always sympathetically) on the commitments of their peers. If they at the same stage of signing the charter, they will be able to be interviewed at the same time.

3 Further Assessment – Field Visits

If further evidence is required on the progress of commitments, the eco-player will welcome the members of the Monitoring Committee for an on-site visit to determine the progress made.

4 Failure to Comply Process

If the report, interview and field visit do not demonstrate to the Monitoring Committee that sufficient progress has been made, the Committee may decide to warn the eco-player they are non-compliant with the charter conditions and need to improve. They will have one year to comply with the Committee's recommendations.

The Committee may mandate it's sponsor to another eco-player in the network to mentor and oversee the process of improvement.

The mandated member or the Monitoring Committee produce written documentation stating how the eco-player must improve and the new deadline given for ascertaining compliance with the commitments. One copy will be sent to the eco-player and another copy will be sent to the Monitoring Committee.

After two warnings, exclusion from the network is possible. The Monitoring Committee will pronounce the exclusion of the eco-player in writing. It is advisable that the national MAB committee or a third-party organization be in charge of sending a notification to the eco-player, in order to provide the necessary evidence and to avoid any future conflicts.

5 Renewal of Eco-Player Status

If the Monitoring Committee are satisfied with the report, interview and field visit, they send their recommendation of renewal (and evidence of this) to the BR managers who notify the eco-player they have been successful and will remain on the charter for another period (1-3 years).

Eco-players are then invited to update their commitments and add new ones as appropriate.

Alternative Approaches

The methodology above is considered best practice, however, this approach is only viable if the Biosphere has the necessary resources (both financial and human). It requires staff time to facilitate, monitor and evaluate. This approach may require adapting if the Biosphere Reserve is newly created and lacks visibility amongst the general public, or lacks the resources required.

A different approach could be to take a 'celebratory' stance where good practices are celebrated and advertised on a dedicated charter website/social media. The commitments are not monitored in the same way as above, instead, businesses suggest targets and then are celebrated when they achieve them. This requires far less facilitation and monitoring. Businesses can benefit from free marketing if they achieve their targets.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The monitoring and evaluation process includes:

- *Peer review and follow-up (self-assessment), with commitments evaluated every 2-3 years.*
- *An assessment of progress (where possible).*
- *Valuing and recognising best practice - including rewards (provides opportunities for positive publicity and advertising and encourages others to do the same).*

OTHER KEY POINTS

MARKETING AND BRANDING

Please be aware that although the recognition «eco-player» may not correspond to a conventional label or a brand the eco-player will be able to use the Biosphere Reserve logo to promote some of its activities, services or products by permission from the BR mana-

ger. «Eco-player» recognition is also differentiated from a brand by the fact that the candidate is judged on their desire and progress on improving their practices and not on the environmental and social performance at the time of their candidacy. The purpose of the charter is to engage local actors, encourage them and help them to adopt more sustainable practices.

In addition, a network-specific logo can be created in order to enhance the membership of eco-players in the network, like the «eco-player buffer» developed in the Marais Audo-marois BR.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

If there is disagreement about decisions taken during the chain of review and evaluation, the signatory can appeal to the BR managers.

The candidate should make their appeal in writing and refer it to the BR managers who would then communicate it to the Monitoring Committee. The latter decides on the appeal. The decision is taken by a majority of the quorum; Committee members vote by secret ballot.

The Committee's decision will be notified in writing, firstly to the interested signatory. In the event of difficulties in implementing this decision, the Monitoring Committee would appeal, as a last resort, to the National MAB Committee.

The term «Biosphere Reserve» is filed with the UK Intellectual Property Office, therefore the UK MAB Committee can, where necessary, resort to litigation.

FEEDBACK SHEETS

In the era of separated ways of life, the Biosphere Reserves want to take the opposite view and remind us that we are all individuals made for constructing societies together. Creating connections, sharing skills to progress towards improvement of these practices, towards more awareness of the impact of their actions, illustrates the aims of the eco-player network: to work together and guide each other in sharing expertise and social skills with future local players.

Creating an eco-player network is one example of many for putting into practice all notions

that entail the idea of sustainable development. Each area must develop tools adapted to their specificities and issues.

This has been shown and it is always evolving, growing.

In addition, these values are illustrated by tools that will always be shared between the territories and which are important for UNESCO: the culture and values of a population, conservation and sustainable use of resources, working with indigenous and local expertise, and education and raising awareness.



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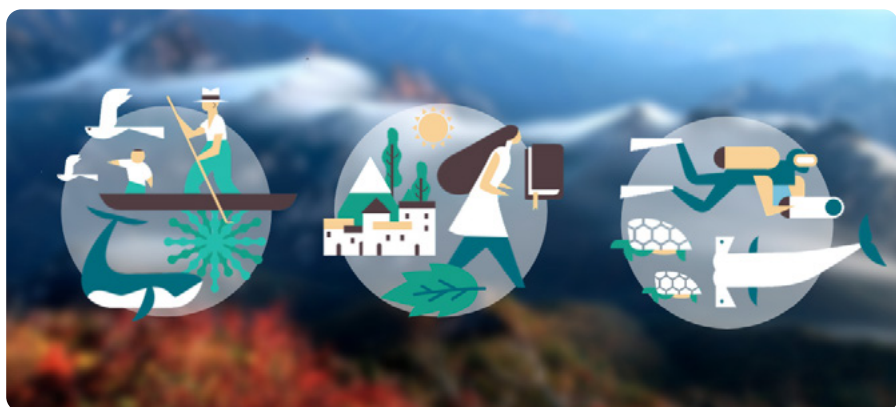
APPENDIXES

- Presentation of the Man and Biosphere programme
- Presentation of the Sustainable Development Goals

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UNESCO'S MAB PROGRAMME



The Man and Biosphere programme is a UNESCO science programme that aims to lay the foundations for the rational and sustainable use and conservation of biosphere resources, as well as to improve the overall relationship between humans and their environment. It encourages the development of interdisciplinary research, experiments and disseminates practices, approaches and know-how for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals, accompanying the UN Agenda 2030.

To do this, it relies on its global network of biosphere reserves.

A GLOBAL NETWORK

As of 2020, the MAB network has 701 Biosphere Reserves in 124 countries, including 21 cross-border sites:

- 79 sites in 29 African countries
- 33 sites in 12 Arab State countries
- 157 sites in 24 countries in Asia and the Pacific
- 302 sites in 38 European and North American countries
- 130 sites in 21 Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Biosphere Reserves are proposed by national governments and remain under the sovereign jurisdiction of the States where they are located.

BIOSPHERE RESERVES

Biosphere Reserves are «places to learn about sustainable development.» These are sites that test interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes and interactions between social and ecological systems, including conflict prevention and biodiversity management.

Biosphere Reserves include terrestrial, marine and coastal ecosystems. Each reserve promotes solutions that balance biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.

They involve local communities and any stakeholders interested in taking action and achieving the following three goals:

- Conservation of biodiversity and cultural diversity
- Socio-culturally and environmentally sustainable economic development
- Logistical support, supporting development through research, follow-up, education and training

To learn more about the MAB program and its Biosphere Reserves visit:

fr.unesco.org/mab

www.mab-france.org/fr

ANIMATION PROPOSAL::

To better understand the Biosphere Reserves' missions and the benefits of consultation on the territories, the Cevennes Biosphere Reserve designed a game.

This collaborative role-playing game, designed to bring together up to 15 players, consists of browsing through the Biosphere Reserve, discovering its heritage, its natural and cultural treasures... If they come upon hazards or events, players will have to make land management choices whilst reconciling nature protection and maintaining human activities.

A game lasts about 2 hours. The game was originally designed for a young audience (children), with relatively easy questions about their area. However, it is easy to adapt it to a more sophisticated public and makes it possible to raise awareness of the relations between different groups of actors present in the same territory, the relationship between man and nature and the notion of sustainable development.



THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

WHAT ARE THEY?

In September 2015, the 193 UN Member States adopted the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda entitled Agenda 2030. In a plan of action for humanity and the planet, it draws up a detailed roadmap and covers virtually all social issues. States have collectively committed to achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out in this agenda by 2030.

5 MAJOR CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

These 17 goals of societal global transformation were created to address global challenges related to climate change, the preservation of natural resources, territorial and intergenerational solidarity. This agenda is characterized by its cross-cutting and by the recognition of the links between the different dimensions of development: economic, social and environmental. Its implementation must take into account these connections between the different goals.

WHO IS INVOLVED?

The state, local authorities, businesses, trade unions, researchers, associations, citizens, users...

Achieving these SDGs involves mobilizing

everyone, in a spirit of co-responsibility, open governance and partnership.

ANIMATIONS AROUND THE SDGS

To familiarize stakeholders with the Sustainable Development Goals, participatory workshops can be offered. Different tools exist such as quizzes or board games.

Adult public

A quiz of about ten questions can allow participants to take stock of their knowledge and draw their attention to specific topics.

Sample quiz: a ready-to-use quiz is available on the net. It is accompanied by an online tool to allow participants to play directly via their smartphone. This quiz is available at www.sulitest.org/en/index.html.

For information, this tool is not free, but it is possible to benefit from this idea by creating one's own questions.

Some examples of questions:

In 1999, 1.7 billion people lived below the extreme poverty line (less than \$1.9 per day).

In 2015, this number:

- A. Had decreased to about 736,000 people.
- B. Had decreased to about 736 million people.
- C. Had stagnated.
- D. had increased to about 2 billion people.

Among these 4 Sustainable Development Goals, which does not exist:

- A. access to quality education
- B. intergenerational Solidarity
- C. gender equality
- D. partnerships to achieve goals

How many SDGs and associated targets are there in the 2030 agenda?

- A. 8 SDGs and 20 targets.
- B. 17 SDGs and 169 targets.
- C. 110 SDGs and 110 targets.
- D. 17 SDGs and 70 targets.

Child audience

A game called «Sustainable Planet Goal» has been developed by the United Nations and is accessible free of charge at www.go-goals.org/fr/

Based on a popular French children’s board game, it allows children to discover the Sustainable Development Goals and their issues through five sets of 17 questions, on topics as varied and cross-cutting as the SDGs.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

For more information visit:

www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/fr/objectifs-de-developpement-durable

OBJECTIFS DE DÉVELOPPEMENT DURABLE





INITIAL CONTACT WITH CANDIDATES

SUPPORTING THE DEFINITION OF COMMITMENTS

The charter's commitments illustrate the objectives that the eco-players wish to achieve in terms of improving their practices and involvement as an ambassador. They must therefore be defined in consultation with the eco-players and adapted to their practices and working environment.

The individual interview is a special time with the eco-player, during which he or she can freely express his or her expectations, fears, and desires. It is a horizontal dialogue between the two actors whose objective is the construction of common objects with a view to acting or deciding together (Bouamrane, 2006). Concerted action goes further than mere dialogue or consultation because the actors involved are fully integrated into the development of the charter.

Prior to the interview, the facilitator draws up an interview guide in which he or she will specify the issues to be addressed by the charter, a description of the activity of the person who has been met and the commitments that will be made by the eco-player. The eco-player assesses his or her activity and identifies the subjects which he or she would like to improve.

This interview can be carried out using the semi-directive interview method, a tool for gathering information through an informal conversation between several people. It is also a way of gaining access to the actors of a territory, to their history, values, and expertise as daily users of the area under study (Bongrand & Laborier, 2005). Based on an interview grid, this exchange makes it possible to address previously defined themes without directing the interviewee's response.

Objective: to precisely define the activity of the person, his or her practices, motivations, etc.

The interview grid can therefore be built around: 1) collecting information on the activity carried out, 2) the actor's current knowledge of BR in particular that in which he or she carries out his or her activity, 3) the actor's sensitivity to the approach and its values, 4) the actor's ability to intervene in a concerted management approach, 5) analysing networks already operating or not between actors.

Introducing the guide should make it possible to establish a climate of trust from the very beginning of the interview.

The guide also includes commitment ideas for restarting the discussion.

The guide includes a section on the activity itself: reception capacity, the presence of green spaces on site, places impacted by the activity, etc. The guide also includes a section on the activity itself.

Introduction

The Biosphere Reserve and the commitment charter

The respondent's activity

Commitments

Expectations of the Biosphere Reserve's facilitators

Monitoring commitments

The interview should last no more than an hour and should lead to a first list of ideas for commitments.

Following the interviews, the facilitator writes a summary of the main ideas put forward by the actors during these interviews. A workshop will allow for discussion between all those met on the charter. It is an opportunity for each of them to conclude their reflection on the commitments they wish to make.

Once their commitments have been formulated, the eco-players are invited to complete the charter.

(Source : Finck, 2016)





1st group meeting

INTRODUCING THE BIOSPHERE RESERVE CONCEPT AND ITS VALUES, AND THE

ECO-PLAYERS APPROACH

This first group contact allows the actors to get to know the people they will be working with on this territorial project. It is a first step in the creation of a network and links. Moreover, the proposed workshop introduces them to the collective work approach and allows them to reflect together on the interest of BR and to create a common image. It is also an opportunity for everyone to have the same level of information.

Objectives: To inform and raise awareness among participants about Biosphere Reserves and their values, and to get active members to adhere to and get used to group work and participatory workshops.

FACILITATION PROPOSALS

Discussion and consensus: In small groups, the participants introduce their concrete vision of the Biosphere Reserves' values. Over a fixed period of time, the groups will discuss the themes «Empowering the population» and «Cultivating collective belonging», two of the BRs' main action lines. With the help of one facilitator per group, the participants will be asked to come up with ideas about what these themes mean and how they can be applied in practice in the BR in question.

The ideas expressed should be discussed in the group one by one and a consensus reached, then written down and passed on to another facilitator who will assemble them into categories. If no one is present to categorise at the time the reflection is taking place, the papers can be put aside and categorised by the group.

Photo language: Choose a few Sustainable Development Objectives that are best suited to the context and the actors on the premises, and then each person should select one or two that really mean something to him or her. No judgement, just an exchange. Pooling by each actor by explaining their choice. The facilitator synthesizes and explains the interest of this work for the foreseeable future.

Quiz: This activity is a fun way to discover the Biosphere Reserve. Prepare a «true» or «false» quiz that provides knowledge about the territory, its heritage, the BR's history and the actions carried out there. If possible, use the Biosphere Reserve's badge to raise a hand when they think that the statement is true.



IDENTIFYING THE ECO-PLAYERS' CHARTER VALUES AND

INTRODUCING THE DEFINITION OF COMMITMENTS

In principle, this workshop brings together people who are really interested in the eco-player approach and who are aware of the BR's values. The aim of this second meeting is to use the elements that emerged from the first workshop to define commitments in favour of sustainable development that are adapted to the actors and the territory.

Objectives: To co-construct the eco-players' commitments in favour of the BR's sustainable development and to maintain the participants' interest in the eco-player approach.

FACILITATION PROPOSALS

Changing landscapes: This facilitation brings information to everyone, but requires a facilitator to refocus the discussions, otherwise one can remain «stuck in the past» and not think about the future, about what the participants would like for the foreseeable future. This facilitation can take time, depending on the anecdotes being told.

Objective: to allow a discussion between the participants on the evolution of landscapes as a way of thinking about the territory's future and its development.

Participants pair up and choose one of the oldest photos proposed (recent photos will be

hidden) and answer these questions: Where was the photo taken? Do you know the history of the place/building in the photo? Which are the things that have changed?

Then reveal the recent photos of the same places and ask the question: What are the differences between the two photos?

Then, as a group, briefly summarise what was said in pairs. Other people can add to the story. Discuss the future as a group: how do you perceive the developments (positive or negative) and what would you like the photos to look like in 10 years' time?

«Brainwriting» silent reflection on commitments: Interesting exercise to bounce back on everyone's ideas and use the creative potential of the group to generate ideas. Define the questions asked or the themes written on the papers, so they do not confuse the participants. Emphasise reflection on potential commitments and not generalities such as «Let's all stick together». This is not an easy exercise, as some participants may not have ideas for each theme.

Objective: to identify commitments in favour of the sustainable development of the Biosphere Reserve.

First, show the comments from the 1st workshop on «what does it mean for you to be an eco-player in the Biosphere Reserve?» Make decisions as a group on certain terms and conditions. Ask "in what form do you wish to make a commitment?" "Are you ready to sign an eco-player commitment charter that brings all together?" or "Would you prefer to make an individual commitment?"

Next, use the brainwriting technique to turn ideas into commitments and enrich them with all the participants' visions.

The idea is to add to each person's ideas as they come up (it is forbidden to make negative comments on the ideas put forward). Each participant reflects for 2-3 mins on the question asked and notes his or her ideas on the cards (1 idea = one card). He or she passes the card to his or her neighbour on the left who must in turn complete it and take the idea a step further. When the card has passed through everyone's hands, it is put aside. Once all the cards have been completed, each card is read so that everyone can benefit from all the thoughts and reflections.

In a third step, discuss together the expectations regarding the creation or facilitation of the network.

The second meeting can take place around the definition of the objectives related to these values (specifications sheet).

The second meeting can take the form of a workshop in order to define objectives.

Facilitation proposal: The weather facilitation tool allows the eco-players' priority objectives to be highlighted: the participants write on the «sun» sheet what would be interesting to carry out as «good action» and on the «cloud» sheet the actions they consider as «bad action». Thus, after having

reviewed the predefined general themes (e.g. environmental awareness, sustainable management of the site, social link, etc.), some actions are discussed in order to clarify their goal. An analysis is then carried out by the facilitator, following this workshop, in order to highlight objectives in common.

The third meeting can take place around the definition of commitments (several options: individual interview or group meeting).

If the BR decides to define a charter with commitments, the manager has two options: define the commitments in the workshop or in the individual interview.

In the meeting, the discussion can be started based on the grid with the objectives defined during the previous meeting. The participants then make proposals for concrete commitments that contribute to these objectives, relating to the activities or the local context. The meeting can end with a general vote on the commitments, by theme and by objective. It may also be interesting to define both mandatory and optional commitments.

In an individual interview, the eco-player, guided by the facilitator, defines his or her commitments (a grid of examples of commitments can be proposed by the facilitator in case the eco-player cannot define them by himself or herself). This method can be personalised and adapted to each eco-player's context and activity.



ANNUAL "ECO-PLAYERS" MEETINGS

The annual meetings are essentially an opportunity to assess the network's development. It is often an opportunity to assess the activities carried out during the year and to obtain feedback from the eco-players in order to adapt to their needs for the following year. These meetings can be part of creating or redesigning the charter stages. In the Biosphere Reserve of the Audouard Marsh, it is a different eco-player who hosts the meeting each year on his or her premises or property. The host eco-player is thus invited to present his or her activity. This contributes to a better knowledge of what each person does on a daily basis, their activity, their areas of interest. It is a high point for the network, always under the sign of conviviality with the organisation of a

coffee break or a meal. Managers can thus use different innovative facilitation techniques during these meetings depending on the day's objective (network and Biosphere Reserve news, assessment, evaluation and ways of improving the network, etc.).

FACILITATION PROPOSAL

Icebreaker: This facilitation creates a good atmosphere to start a work session in listening, respect and kindness. There are many icebreaker facilitations, to be adapted according to the context, the progress of the eco-players' network, and how much the actors know each other.

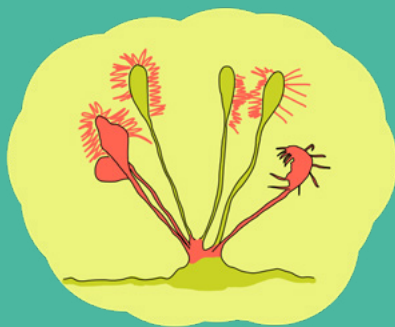
Objective: To enable actors to get to know each other so that they can work, exchange and share more easily.





THE BIOSPHERE CHARTER

WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE BIOSPHERE



CONTENT

The Biosphere Reserves aim to fulfil three complementary and interconnected functions:

- **Conservation** : protect biodiversity, landscapes and cultural diversity;
- **Local development**: favour economic and human development that is environmentally and socially sustainable and culturally appropriate;
- **Scientific monitoring, raising awareness and education**: better understand in order to better protect and to understand the interactions between social and ecological systems.

In order to achieve these aims, the Biosphere Reserves agree to steer several projects, including:

- To protect and promote environmental and cultural heritage in their areas
- To improve the environmental viability of businesses and collectives
- To support the local economy, social cohesion and community well-being

The commitments

Large categories have been established to guide the eco-players and nurture their reflection on the commitments that they may make, in order to contribute to the BR objectives and respond to the local issues. Each eco-player is therefore free to use this table if required and to personalise their commitments.

EXAMPLE OF COMMITMENTS 1 CONSERVATION

GOALS...	I'M COMMITTED TO...
<p>C1 : Protect and promote the biodiversity, landscapes and natural resources of the Biosphere Reserve</p>	<p>C1 : Implement land/garden management practices that aim to protect fauna (installing nesting boxes for birds or bats, etc.).</p> <hr/> <p>For site managers: C1 : For tourist sites, manage and modify movement, activities and behaviours in order to minimise or reduce the impact of visitors on sensitive zones and sites and inform visitors of alternative, less sensitive sites/times (including low season, avoiding bird mating season, etc.).</p>
<p>C2 : Protect and promote the cultural heritage and distinctive charm of the Biosphere Reserve</p>	<p>C2 : Protect and promote local expertise and cultural heritage by offering visitors the chance to get involved and learn about local cultural practices or by organising events that promote local culture.</p>
<p>C3 : Minimise the environmental impact</p>	<p>C3 : Réduire la consommation d'énergie et d'eau, produire de l'énergie renouvelable, utiliser des technologies alternatives, réduire les déchets et augmenter le recyclage.</p> <hr/> <p>C3 : Compenser les dommages des activités nuisibles pour l'environnement - par exemple planter des arbres supplémentaires si un grand volume de papier est utilisé.</p> <hr/> <p>Pour les gestionnaires de sites : C3 : Pour les sites touristiques, gérer et modifier les flux, les activités et les comportements afin de minimiser ou de réduire l'impact des visiteurs dans les zones et sites sensibles et indiquer aux visiteurs des sites/horaires alternatifs moins sensibles (y compris la basse saison, éviter la saison de reproduction des oiseaux, etc.).</p>

EXAMPLE OF COMMITMENTS 2

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

GOALS...	I'M COMMITTED TO...
<p>D1 : Engage with local businesses and support them in promoting sustainable development and sustainable products</p>	<p>D1 : Engage with as many local businesses as possible that operate responsibly in terms of the environment and society.</p> <hr/> <p>D1 : Promote local, sustainable products.</p>
<p>D2 : Improve the quality of tourism-related experiences by building on the distinctive charm and environment of the Biosphere Reserve</p>	<p>D2 : Develop high-quality, immersive tourist experiences that integrate with local environmental and cultural heritage.</p> <hr/> <p>D2 : Improve individual efforts by combining several activities and working in collaboration with other businesses and organisations.</p>
<p>D3 : Contribute to the well-being of local communities within the Biosphere Reserve</p>	<p>D3 : Promote and offer sustainable visiting opportunities that strengthen community infrastructure, social cohesion and well-being, including tourist activities outside of high season and promoting soft modes of transport (bikes, etc.).</p> <hr/> <p>D3 : Incorporate or promote collective, therapeutic and well-being activities.</p> <hr/> <p>For site managers:</p> <p>D3 : Improve site accessibility for all members of the public (especially persons with reduced mobility).</p>

EXAMPLE OF COMMITMENTS 3

AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

GOALS...	I'M COMMITTED TO...
<p>A1 : Raise awareness of the Biosphere Reserve environment, the impact of tourism and the advantages of sustainable use</p>	<p>A1 : Inform visitors of the impact of tourism and the fragile nature of the local environment</p> <hr/> <p>A1, A2 : Educate, monitor and communicate on key themes relating to sustainability and the biosphere (biodiversity, reducing the impacts of tourism, sustainable practices, etc.).</p> <hr/> <p>A1, A2 : Support the improvement of sustainability by providing data for research.</p>
<p>A2 : Engage with the network signatory members of the “Biosphere Charter” and share knowledge and best practices</p>	<p>A2 : Promote and maintain the eco-player network.</p> <hr/> <p>A2 : Promote and participate in events organised by the BR.</p> <hr/> <p>A2 : Facilitate knowledge exchanges and share best practices with the other network members.</p> <hr/> <p>For site managers :</p> <p>A1, A2 : Monitor the state of biodiversity and the impact of tourism on the environment and share associated knowledge.</p> <hr/> <p>S2 : Support and assist the eco-players in achieving their aims.</p> <hr/> <p>S2 : Offer training and knowledge exchange opportunities to local businesses, visitors and inhabitants on the issues of the BR territory.</p>



EXAMPLES OF THE 4 BIOSPHERE RESERVES

NORTH DEVON BIOSPHERE RESERVE (NDBR)

Website screen shot

The North Devon Biosphere Reserve has decided to follow the common method of the «Biosphere Charter» with 3 themes and a series of commitments. The North Devon Biosphere Reserve has chosen to target local businesses, thus designated as «Biosphere Partner Companies». To join the network of «Biosphere Partner Enterprises», they must choose at least 5 commitments out of the 12 proposed to join the network (it is possible to create an additional commitment per theme).

BRIGHTON AND LEWES DOWNS BIOSPHERE RESERVE (BLDBR)

The BLDBR has chosen a completely different method. Their main objective was to make the general public and local businesses aware of the concept and values of the Biosphere Reserve in order to involve them in their future actions. Not having sufficient resources (human and financial) to create an eco-player network over time, they decided to implement a sharing of good practices and a marketing campaign (via social networks).

Thus, good practices are regularly updated on the BLDBR website and communication tools are dispatched among eco-players.

AUDOMAROIS MARSH BIOSPHERE RESERVE (AMBR)

The AMBR was the only one of the 4 BRs of the BCHT project to have an eco-player network established since 2016. When it revised its charter in 2020, AMBR chose to use a grid with no predefined commitments. This grid contains 5 themes and a series of objectives related to each theme. The commitments are free. This choice makes it possible to open up the network to a maximum number of very different actors, structures and fields. The commitments are personalised and defined in individual interviews with each eco-player. The commitments take into account the ambition of the eco-player and his or her technical and financial resources.

IROISE SEA AND ISLANDS BIOSPHERE RESERVE (ISIBR)

ISIBR has chosen to follow the common method of the «Biosphere Charter» based on the values of the Biosphere Reserve around 3 themes and a series of commitments.

Given the limited number of people living in the islands and the Iroise Sea, the eco-player charter is proposed to all people living and/or working in the Iroise Biosphere Reserve. The eco-player can be an inhabitant, an association, a school, a community or a professional who is committed or wishes to commit to sustainable practices for the Biosphere Reserve. In Iroise, the eco-player must make 5 concrete commitments to be met every 2 years, in favour of the Biosphere Reserve's heritage, its inhabitants and the island's economic life. A list of commitments

is proposed to the eco-player, but it is also possible for the eco-player to personalise his or her commitments according to his or her activity. He or she also commits to participating in the life of the network by taking part in the various meetings, making the members of the network known and talking about their activities, having regular contact with the network's facilitators... The eco-players are invited to implement a project or collective action for the territory that will be the subject of particular monitoring.

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CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN BIOSPHERE RESERVES

In order to involve local actors in environmental preservation and commitment to sustainable development, it is important first of all to introduce them to the Biosphere Reserve (BR) concept and its values and to share with them the issues at stake in their territory; the objective being to enable them to participate in BR actions.

Participating is «taking part in something». There are two types of participation: participation by assimilation (consultation on the proposal of the manager) and critical participation (consultation, decision-making power of the inhabitants) (E. Friedberg and M Crozier). The idea of participation is also

to create social links, it is indeed a method of intervention and local management; it is a deliberate choice.

Creating a partnership or informing the inhabitants are therefore two examples of participatory approaches. However, they do not allow for the same kind of involvement. The quality of the participatory process is essentially based on the inclusion of stakeholders in the construction of a project.

The scale of participation below helps to understand the different degrees of impact that the different modes of participation can have in improving decision-making.



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CONCERTATION

The action of «planning together», of agreeing to act together. The inhabitants are involved in this reflection, this construction. We prepare the decision-making process.

CO-DECISION

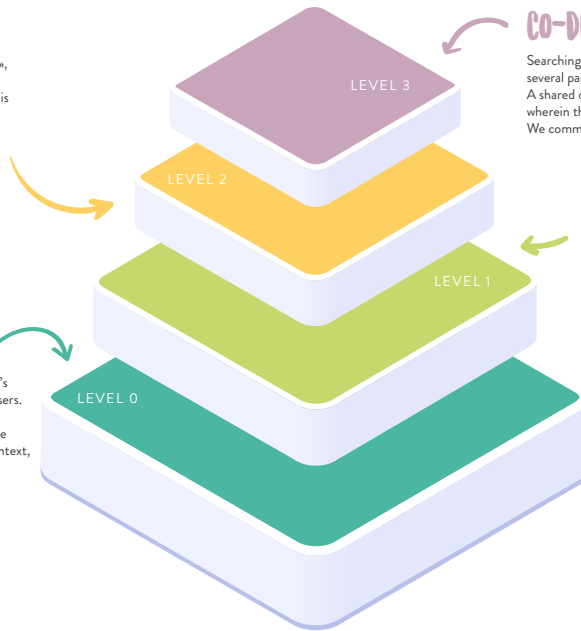
Searching for agreement between several parties. A shared decision-making process wherein the inhabitants take part. We commit to implement.

INFORMATION

To give elements on the territory's projects to the inhabitants and users. Their opinion is not solicited. Allows access to knowledge of the problem to be dealt with, in its context, with the constraints and possible margins of manoeuvre.

CONSULTATION

Collecting the inhabitants' opinion so as to know their view. Their remarks won't necessarily be taken into account in the project. The consultation requires that which is being debated and that which is not to be precisely identified.



Source: *Nature Biodiversité, Tous Concernés ! Réseau Ecole et Nature, 2013, co-édition REN-RNF, p. 29*

BRs are areas of experimentation where biodiversity conservation cannot be envisaged without the involvement and dialogue between local actors for a better conciliation between local economic activities and the conservation

of biodiversity, habitats and cultural heritage. The sustainability of a territory depends on the sustainability of the activities that take place there. The commitment of local actors is therefore an important lever to introduce.



TRAININGS

In the BR of the Audomarois Marsh, annual training is being offered to the «eco-player» network. This free training, provided by the managers of the Biosphere Reserve or their partners, allows them to update data (on the state of biodiversity for example) but also to enable the network to learn more about their territory and its evolution. At their request, the training can evolve from year to year: natural, cultural and historical heritage, etc. Thus, depending on the topic, managers can invite territorial partners to these training sessions. This makes it possible to make the link between the actors of the territory. These training sessions can be the subject of a consultation with the eco-players, in order

to better identify their needs and centres of interest. If a professional sector is strongly represented (e.g. breeders), specific training sessions can be offered on request (e.g. anti-parasite treatment of horses). For an area where tourism is a major issue, annual training sessions could be offered on the heritage of the BR and thus provide tourism professionals with information that is always precise and up-to-date (number of species present, local producers, historical data, etc.).

Thanks to these training sessions, the eco-players will be able to raise their skills and their environmental commitment to a higher level, with knowledge adapted to their territory.

© François Rolland





PROMOTING THE ECO-PLAYERS NETWORK

During a local event promoting the Biosphere Reserve (BR), discovery tours of the area can be offered to the general public. This is an opportunity to promote the eco-player network. A kiosk run by the eco-players enables information on the BR and the network to be disseminated throughout the day, while «discovery of the territory» tours are organised by eco-players. Thus, grouped in pairs, the eco-players carry out unusual/atypical/VIP visits and allow the territory's inhabitants and visitors to live different experiences.

Here are a few examples of activities and tools created in the BRs:

«THE BIOSPHERE RESERVE'S ANNIVERSARY»

To mark the creation of the Audomarois Marsh BR and to take advantage of this designation date to get closer to the inhabitants, the BR proposes a walk, to the inhabitants, in the heart of the Reserve. This slow walk supervised by the BR leader and the eco-players is an opportunity to discover the fauna, flora, history, and activities of the BR in favour of the Marsh. During this walk, a gustatory and cultural break is offered: tasting of local products, storytelling.

«AVRIL EN BALADE»

A festival of walks and hikes is organised every year in the BR of the Gardon gorges. The eco-players have decided to get involved in its organisation to promote their approach to the general public. Each eco-player, according to his or her skills and activity, can contribute in a different way: some organise guided walks with various themes (discovery of local flora, nature sports, workshop on medicinal plants, etc.) while others have a stand to present their network and the BR. A highlight of the festival is also devoted to the public signing of charters by the network's new eco-players.

NETWORK PROMOTION TOOLS

Depending on the means and needs formulated by the eco-players, several BRs have developed promotion tools for their network of eco-players: NDBR and AMBR stamps, photo portraits, roll-ups, diplomas, presentation leaflets, websites but also the organisation of meetings with the local press and promotion on social networks.

MUTUAL PROMOTION OF THE BIOSPHERE AND ECO-PLAYERS

Ideally, environmental and biosphere actors should work together to promote the network and promote each other.

The territory and the biosphere would benefit, as promotion would encourage new businesses to join the network. Businesses benefit from being recognised as companies committed to sustainable development and working in collaboration with a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

One way to achieve this is through the use of social media.

The use of hashtag, for example, specific to the eco-players' network, would offer companies another readability. The Brighton & Lewes Downs Biosphere Reserve (The Living Coast) uses the hashtag #wearethelivingcoast. It encourages companies to use it when publishing information about the biosphere or

actions in favour of the Biosphere Reserve. The Biosphere Reserve can also mention and promote exemplary companies as soon as the action proves relevant through its communication tools.

Partnerships with local tourist offices can also be created to promote the network and the companies that are part of it. This can be done by sharing stories or news that might be of interest to visitors.

It is also possible to promote the network's businesses through blog posts. These could focus on the company itself and what it does, but also on its sustainable actions and its contribution to the Biosphere Reserve. This could also be an advantage in joining the network.



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NETWORKING EVENTS

Created in June 2019 in the Audomarois Marsh BR, the «eco-café» are monthly events. These meetings are moments of conviviality, sharing, exchanges and encounters. During a coffee break, the AMBR's eco-players and all those who want to, can come and meet up every first Tuesday of the month.

This new time of meeting is an opportunity to hear from everyone and to exchange on the eco-players' news, the Biosphere Reserve's life, and daily life. It is also an interesting time to meet people who are curious, inhabitants who want to learn more or future eco-players.

By organising these meetings, the AMBR managers are responding to a request

from the network to meet more often and exchange good practices. On the other hand, the organisation of these additional exchange times requires working time. It was therefore decided when the «eco-café» were set up not to include any agenda or minutes (apart from specific information to be distributed to the network if necessary) and to set up an informal «who wants to come» without having to give notice of his or her presence or absence.

After several months of operation, these exchange times have led to a stronger synergy of the actions carried out, the network has been consolidated and mutual aid is now at the heart of the decisions/proposals for action.





NETWORKING EVENTS

Educ'Tour : In order to raise eco-players' awareness of Biosphere Reserve issues, study trips (or educ'tours) can be organised. A small group of participants is thus invited to visit another Biosphere Reserve (BR) and to meet actors from this BR's partner territory (eco-players or not) to exchange on their commitment and share good practices beyond their territory.

Study trips or Educ'tours present several interests:

- By making eco-players discover the richness and commitments of another BR, we illustrate the added value of a national and global network for constantly improving practices.
- These inter-network meetings enable the successes and failures of each one to be shared, so that the objectives set by the charters can be achieved more quickly.
- These educ'tours can be centred around a particular theme and thus bring together eco-players from the same professional sector to enrich and deepen the usual exchanges. New synergies can even be created, for example through partnerships.
- The sharing of experience between eco-players and the discovery of their professional activity by visitors can strengthen their sense of pride and belonging to BR.

National Eco-players' Day: Each year in France a national ceremony is organised at UNESCO to reward the winners of the BR Trophies - winners of particularly original projects in the field of sustainable development. Each BR thus sends their competition's winners to Paris for a half-day presentation of the projects and the award ceremony.

Following the same model, the new signatories of the country's eco-player charters could be brought together at an annual meeting. This would formalise the signature of the charter by the president of the national MAB committee and thus give it a more solemn form. Each signatory could also officially present his or her commitments to the French BR network. This would certainly strengthen their sense of pride. Indeed, the symbolism of UNESCO is always strong for local actors, who see these ceremonies as an international recognition of their commitment.

As an alternative to a ceremony at UNESCO, one can imagine a more festive gathering, during which the eco-players would present their products or their BRs and participate in conferences, screenings, exchange workshops, etc. Again, the aim is to create links between eco-players from different BRs to enrich the sharing of experience and create synergy nationally.

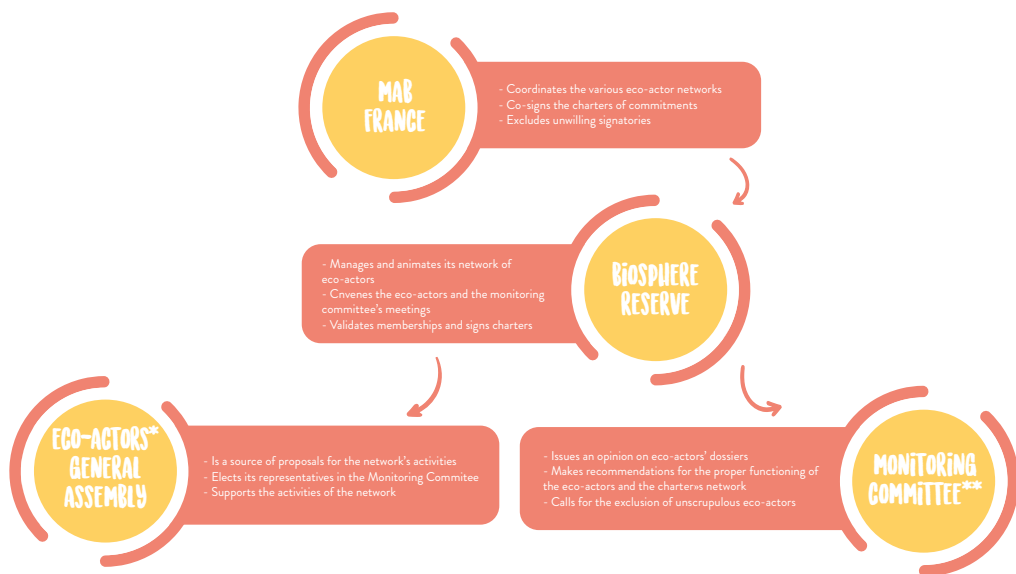


GOVERNING THE ECO-PLAYERS' NETWORK

The governance of the eco-player charters and the resulting networks concern the processes of monitoring commitments and decision-making, which are essential to the proper functioning of the approach. The idea is to clarify and formalise everyone's role in the charter's management, in order to make it run more smoothly and to avoid frustration. The aim is to enable the eco-players to participate in the governance of the charter in order to take full

ownership of it and strengthen its legitimacy. The eco-players thus become ambassadors of their network and their BR. The responsibilities of each of the stakeholders must be recalled as soon as the charter is signed, as they are part of the contract.

According to a study carried out within the framework of a Leader cooperation project between 3 pioneering BRs in 2015, governance is proposed according to the following scheme:



**The General Assembly of eco-players brings together all the eco-players of the network.*

***The monitoring committee is made up of stakeholders for the Biosphere Reserve, such as:*

electd representatives of eco-players, representatives of Tourist Offices, Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Chambers of Agriculture, local associations for the protection of nature, etc.

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Natural and Cultural Heritage /
 Patrimoine naturel et culturel



North Devon

Credit: Murray Ballard



Brighton & Lewes Downs



Îles et de la Mer d'Iroise

Credit: Philippe Fruiter



Marais Audomarois

The Bio-Cultural Heritage Tourism project will explore ways of involving visitors in activities that celebrate the culture and heritage that is linked to the natural environment.

Notre projet de tourisme bio-culturel permettra d'impliquer les visiteurs dans des activités qui valorisent l'interaction entre culture, patrimoine et nature.



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