

# IUCN protected area management categories

## Statement of Compliance for Biosphere Reserves

### Introduction to Statements of Compliance

Statements of Compliance are an innovation of the IUCN National Committee for the United Kingdom's *Putting Nature on the Map* project. The project has developed guidance on the use of the IUCN definition of a protected area and the assignment of the associated management categories and governance types<sup>1</sup>. The guidance suggests that short but authoritative Statements of Compliance are produced for a conservation site or group of sites.

For groups of sites designated for conservation under one overriding piece of legislation or public policy the statements should concentrate on whether the sites meets the IUCN definition of a protected area. For statutory designations the Statements of Compliance should review all relevant legislation, focussing on the priority given to nature conservation in the long-term. For sites not covered by legislation the statements should review the significance for nature conservation of all relevant public policy positions that specifically affect the area.

In addition to reviewing legislation or policy in relation to the IUCN definition of a protected area, individual sites can also review in their Statement of Compliance which IUCN management category and governance type should be assigned to the site. In this case the statements should also provide an overview of current management objectives in particular in relation to prioritising nature conservation and summarize examples of current management practice that demonstrate the priority given to nature conservation and the ambition and vision for nature conservation in the future.

Note Statements of Compliance should be prepared with full reference to the 2008 Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories (see footnote for details)

The Statement of Compliance below has been prepared for a group of sites defined in legislation.

---

<sup>1</sup> Dudley, N (Editor) (2008) Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. X + 86pp. <http://data.iucn.org/dbtw-wpd/edocs/PAPS-016.pdf>

**AND**

IUCN NCUK (2012); *Putting nature on the map - identifying protected areas in the UK: A handbook to help identify protected areas in the UK and assign the IUCN management categories and governance types to them*, IUCN National Committee for the United Kingdom, UK <http://www.iucn-uk.org/Portals/0/PNOTM%20handbook%20small.pdf>

## Background

Biosphere Reserves are established by UNESCO under its Man & the Biosphere Programme. Proposals are put forward by UNESCO member states to the International Co-ordinating Council of the MAB Programme which makes the decision in the light of the Criteria set out in Article 4 of *The Statutory Framework for the World Network of Biosphere Reserve*<sup>2</sup>.

Biosphere Reserves comprise 3 areas as follows:

- i. Core area: must be devoted to long-term protection, according to the conservation objectives of the biosphere reserves
- ii. Buffer area: to minimise negative and external effects of human and induced activities on the core area and where only activities compatible with the conservation objectives can take place
- iii. Transition area: to promote and develop sustainable resource management in the context of achieving sustainable development.

The table uses the main key in the Putting Nature on the Map Handbook for identifying if a reserve meets the IUCN definition of a protected area<sup>3</sup>. It also takes into account the assessment undertaken of the link between Biosphere Reserves and the IUCN Categories system<sup>4</sup> which concludes that the core and buffer areas do conform to the older IUCN protected areas definition and suggests the Categories which are most likely to apply, but the transition area is more doubtful and might apply only to Categories V and VI.

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to Biosphere Reserves
Is the site a clearly defined geographical area?	Yes. The Madrid Action Plan of the UNESCO MAB (2008) <sup>5</sup> makes it clear that the outer boundary must be formally defined
Is it recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature? NB 'nature' includes all levels of biodiversity as well as geodiversity, landforms and broader natural values.	Yes in general terms as the criteria for selecting Biosphere Reserves (see UNESCO MAB <i>Seville Strategy and Statutory Framework for the World Network of Biosphere Reserves</i> ) are that each encompasses a mosaic of ecological systems representative of major biogeographical regions, is of significance for biological diversity conservation, is seen as a landscape-scale designation, and recognises cultural values. Specifically, yes for the core areas and for the buffer zone. It is more debateable whether the transition area does qualify given its purpose.

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO, 1996. *Biosphere Reserves: The Seville Strategy and the Statutory Framework of the World Network*. UNESCO, Paris.

<sup>3</sup> IUCN NCUK (2012); *Putting nature on the map - identifying protected areas in the UK: A handbook to help identify protected areas in the UK and assign the IUCN management categories and governance types to them*, IUCN National Committee for the United Kingdom, UK. Key A, page 26.

<sup>4</sup> Bridgewater, P., Phillips, A., Green, M. and Amos, B. 1996. *Biosphere Reserves and the IUCN System of Protected Area Management Categories*. IUCN, UNESCO MAB & Australian Nature Conservation Agency. Canberra.

<sup>5</sup> UNESCO, 2008. *Madrid Action Plan for Biosphere Reserves (2008-2013)*. UNESCO, Paris.

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to Biosphere Reserves
Is the main management objective nature conservation? Other objectives of equal standing may be present but they do not cause conflict, i.e. nature conservation is the priority	Yes, certainly for the core area(s) and to a varying degree (depending on designation, management agreements etc.) the buffer zone(s), but generally not the transition area where the primary purpose is the achievement of a much broader concept of sustainable development in which nature conservation is only one element and not a priority one.
Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that will be harmful to the objectives of designation?	Not in any strict legal sense as the designation does not carry any statutory force internationally or nationally. However, the UNESCO International Co-ordinating Council of the MAB Programme can advise the Director-General of UNESCO that a reserve should be withdrawn from the World Network if it does not satisfy the criteria in the Statutory Framework. It is therefore necessary to ascertain whether there is any relevant national legislation.
Does the designation of the site aim to maintain, or ideally, increase the degree of naturalness of the ecosystem being protected?	Yes as Biosphere Reserves should, under the terms of Article 3 of the aforementioned statutory framework, strive to be sites of excellence to explore and demonstrate approaches to conservation by contributing to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic variation.
Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means? E.g. national or international statutory law/ agreement/convention, traditional rules or NGO policy.	Yes in the core and buffer through the periodic reviews of performance by the local, national and international bodies overseeing the functioning of the reserve and designated areas which it contains.

In most cases in the UK, these areas will also be designated under EU or national legislation and this will need to be taken into account in the categorisation of individual Biosphere Reserves. The assessment of an individual Biosphere Reserve should therefore take place after assessment of other designations on the area.