



The UK Man and the Biosphere Committee Urban Forum

Draft Minutes of the UK MAB Urban Forum meeting held 22nd September 2010 at SNH, Edinburgh.

1. Present

Gerald Dawe	(GD)	Independent consultant (Chair)
Ambra Burls	(AB)	Anglia Ruskin University (Deputy Chair)
Peter Cush	(PC)	Northern Ireland Environment Agency
Ian Douglas	(ID)	University of Manchester (Chair Elect)
Scott Ferguson	(SF)	Scottish Natural Heritage
Peter Frost	(PF)	Countryside Council for Wales
Jane Houghton	(JH)	Natural England (by telephonic link)
Nigel Lawson	(NL)	University of Manchester (Secretary)
Lyme, Samantha	(SL)	Natural England
Alison Millward	(AM)	Independent Consultant
Julie Proctor	(JP)	Greenspace Scotland
Joanne Tippett	(JT)	University of Manchester

2. Apologies

Mathew Frith, John Handley, Philip James, Graham Leeks, Alan Scott, Richard Scott, Judy Ling Wong.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes were approved.

4. Matters arising

Outstanding actions from the last meeting were reviewed:

- A1 Request for publications for the Forum web site: NL to write to members who have not yet responded. **A1**
- A2 Logging system (Forum archives): The Forum archives (with the exception of the last 10 years) should, if possible, be lodged at a university and ID undertook to contact John Ryland Library at University of Manchester **A2**
- A3 Nomination of *Roots and Shoots* for the UK MAB Urban Forum Award for Excellence. At the last meeting JLW undertook to attend to this within the next two months and to liaise with MF. NL to follow this up with JLW and MF **A3**
- A4 Nomination of Buglife's legal process for UK MAB Urban Forum Award for Excellence. Buglife have again expressed a desire to be considered for this award and ID undertook to respond to them. **A4**
- A5 News is awaited from UNESCO on the the proposal to aim for Biosphere reserve Status for the Lower Thames Estuary. JH is still to follow this up with Terry Farrell **A5**

- A6 Review of the Forum accounts on an annual basis on behalf of the Secretariat: ID to investigate. **A6**
- A7 AM/AB and JT to devise an appropriate training module is carried forward **A7**.
- A8 to A15 are agenda items and are dealt with below
- A 16 Distribution of 'Discover Yourself Outside' has been done as far as is possible. There are approximately 40 copies left and NL will distribute these on request.
- A 17 to A21 are agenda items and are dealt with below.

5. Chair of UK MAB Urban Forum

GD had previously advised members of his decision to stand down as Chair of the Forum following this meeting due to pressure of work resulting from his position as a Herefordshire County Councillor and other duties. Members accepted his resignation with great regret. GD particularly thanked AB, the Deputy Chair, for her great assistance and support; he paid tribute to the four funding agencies (NE, CCW, SNH and NIEA) for their support to the Forum and he also thanked NL, the Secretary, for his assistance.

Ambra Burls, Ian Douglas and Philip James had offered their candidacy for the post of Chair of the Forum and, following a secret ballot of all members of the Forum, Ian Douglas was elected to succeed GD. GD welcomed ID as Chair Elect.

ID thanked the Forum for their confidence in offering him a second term as Chair whilst stressing a desire to hand over to a younger person in due course. He stressed the need to ensure a continued high profile for the Forum as well as the Forum's financial security.

ID asked AB to remain as deputy Chair which she accepted.

NL had, prior to this meeting, advised the Chair and all the candidates for Chair of his decision to his resign as Secretary after this meeting. ID asked him to stay on as Secretary until the next meeting of the Forum and NL agreed.

AB circulated a series of suggestions for the future of the Forum which were welcomed by ID. ID said that he would also be making some proposals for the future well-being of the Forum.

GD pointed out that the Forum doesn't have a constitution and that it should consider whether or not one was needed.

It was agreed that all these suggestions should be debated at future meetings of the Forum **A8**.

6. Conferences:

a) Post-URGENT meeting (provisional):

This meeting is intended to stimulate connections between outcomes of the URGENT programme and urban-rural ecosystem services. GLe has material on ecological findings from the URGENT programme that have synergy with UNESCO's Biosphere Research programme. GLe will take this forward with David Belpy of EPSRC **A9**

b) Shanghai Expo:

May 1st to October 31st 2010. The MAB Secretariat has contacted the UK MAB Committee saying that they can try to get 1-2 experts from the UK for a meeting at the Expo as part of a larger UNESCO-China Forum on Cultural Heritage and Urban Regeneration.

ID reported that he will be attending the Expo at the invitation of SCOPE, CAST and UNESCO, with the latter paying his costs. He will be making a presentation on the relationship between cities and their rural and natural surroundings, including urban biosphere reserves, which would incorporate UK MAB Urban Forum.

PF highlighted the need to consolidate the work of UNESCO MAB, URBIS and URBIO and ID confirmed that, if appropriate, he would advocate that all three organisations are involved in future initiatives **A10**

7 Greenspaces Toolbox: A methodology for assessing the extent, the quality and the appropriateness of urban greenspace on a given topic area.

The Forum intends to create a "Toolbox" which it intends to fill with "Toolkits"; one of which exists at present (- in two versions the CCW, and the NE Accessible Natural Greenspace Toolkit, developed under contract by John Handley's team at CURE).

The other Toolkits the Forum has decided to develop for the Toolbox will cover: Stress (including noise and light pollution); Street Trees; Air Quality; Heat Islands; Flooding and Urban Water Management.

Two sub-groups have been formed to investigate how to progress the development of guidance on green infrastructure (AM, AB, JH and SL) and on flood/water (GL, ID and NL)

PF and AB have drafted an outline for a Toolkit Pre-assessment System which has been circulated for comment.

Discussion focused on potential barriers to accessing information and the need for some Local Authority Champions to relate issues to their peers (JP); Natural England's Environmental Leadership Programme (JH), and the need to recognise the changed circumstances of LAs during the current financial crises (AM).

PF and AB agreed to meet in November with the intention of finalising the Toolkit Pre-assessment System by February 2011. **A11**

8 A Handbook on Urban Ecology

ID reported that copy editing of the 50 chapter, 600 page, handbook has been finalised and that proofs should be available for authors by early October with potential publication by December 2010. ID thanked UK MAB Urban Forum members for their contributions. He also informed the Forum that the publishers, Taylor and Francis, are now interested in a Textbook on Urban Ecology.

9 New scientific outputs by the Forum

ID suggested that the Forum should consider having a presence at events such as the 2012 Eco Summit in the US and at selected Local Authority and Ecological Society meetings. The Forum could also hold its own annual or bi-annual conference on urban ecology. **A12**

SL suggested that the Forum could, via NE, have a presence at the UK Biodiversity Conference. **A13**

GD reported that he had spoken to the Arboricultural Journal about publication of the papers presented to the Forum's 'Do Street Trees have a Future' conference held in May 2010. After discussion it was agreed that he and AB should investigate taking this forward providing that the Forum retained permission to circulate all the papers to its own network. **A14**

10 Membership and membership structure

PF's proposals for three categories of Forum membership were accepted:

- Members recruited for a 5 year fixed term who would be expected to take an active part in the Forum's work during that period.
- Fellows selected from the membership past and present for their outstanding contribution to the work of the Forum.
- Representatives nominated by the organisations funding the Forum who would have the status of 'Member' but would serve for as long as their organisation continued to fund the Forum. This category could also include invited representatives from non-funding organisations.

Representatives would also be eligible for selection to Fellowship.

A Membership Sub-committee comprising the Chair, Deputy Chair, Secretary PF and PJ reported on its initial deliberations and it was agreed those members who clearly met the criteria should be invited to become Fellows now and NL to issue invitations John Box, Gerald Dawe, Ian Douglas, Peter Frost and David Goode to become Fellows of UK MAB Urban Forum. NL to also issue invitations to past members Grant Luscombe, Peter Shirley and George Barker to become Fellows of UK MAB Urban Forum because they clearly meet the criteria for Fellowship but that option was unavailable to them at the time of their resignation. **A15**.

It was also agreed that those cases where it was not absolutely clear whether or not the member had met the criteria should be further investigated. The spreadsheet showing how members compared to the Fellowship criteria to be circulated to all members with a request that they report any corrections or further evidence to the Secretary in time for further Fellowships to be considered at the next meeting **A16**.

Ian Angus (SNH) had advised the Secretary that he was leaving SNH to join the Strategic Development Plan Authority for South East Scotland and that he was therefore resigning from the Forum. This was accepted with regret.

Scott Ferguson joined the meeting as SNH representative to the Forum and was duly accepted as a Member of the Forum.

11 Awards

NL proposed that the Forum investigate whether Wigan Greenheart Regional Park met the UK-MAB Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence criteria.

Agreed that NL should contact Wigan Greenheart to ascertain their interest in receiving the award and, if the response is positive, either ID, JHan, PJ or NL would investigate **A17**.

12 Web site

NL reported that the web site is up to date. He also reported that the Secretariat had been sub-contracting the maintenance of the web site to Graham Bowden of University of Manchester. It was agreed that £200 per annum would be ring-fenced to ensure continuation of this arrangement.

13 Work Programme

NL reported that the Annual Report 2009/10 and Provisional Work Programme for 2010/11 has been posted on the Forum's web site.

SL proposed that the Forum respond to the Government's White Paper on the natural environment. ID and NL to investigate the process and to initiate the Forum's response **A18**.

14 Financial Report

NL presented the financial statement as at 22nd September 2010 which showed a net current balance of funds (reserves) of £4,718 which include £500 contribution from CCW for 2010/11 and an estimated profit of £1,400 from the Do Street Trees Have a Future conference. Outstanding liabilities are not expected to exceed £500 - £700.

NL also presented a budget for 2010-11 of £4,000 which assumes three meetings per annum, £1,500 towards running the secretariat and no exceptional items (cost of publications/conferences, etc.). If members cover the cost of running the secretariat this would reduce the annual expenditure to circa £2,500 per annum.

CCW have provided £500 core for year ending 5/4/2010 and have undertaken to provide this amount for the following two years. PF also intimated that CCW might be able to fund specific outputs below £1,000 which are not, as yet, part of the Forum's work programme.

JH reported that NE would not be able to provide core funding this year but that it would provide the Forum with the services of its external funding advisor. It also hopes to be able to fund a workshop during year ending 5/4/2012 to which the Forum would be invited to participate. JH also extended an offer on behalf of NE to host future meetings at its premises in London and Birmingham and the possibility for the Forum to use NE's telephone conferencing facility.

PC reported that NIEA would seek to follow NE's approach but that funding exceeding £500 was most unlikely.

SF reported that SNH would have great difficulty in justifying funds to the Forum in the current financial climate.

ID offered the Forum's thanks and appreciation to all the funding agencies for their contributions during these difficult times.

Discussion centred on whether the Forum should consider applying for charitable status and the possibility of employing a professional fund raiser. The importance of noting 'in kind' contributions by agencies hosting meetings (such as that by SNH for this meeting) as well as the unpaid contributions made by members giving of their valuable time to the Forum was also discussed.

ID undertook to consider all potential funding options and to involve all members in a consultation process, both by e-mail and at future meetings of the Forum **A19**.

15 Any other business

There was no other business.

16 Dates of future meetings.

- Wednesday 26th January 2011 in London (venue to be confirmed).