



URBAN FORUM OF THE UK MAN AND THE BIOSPHERE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2001 at Shell Better Britain offices, Birmingham.

1 PRESENT

John Box (Chair)	Peter Jarvis
Christine French (Secretary)	Peter Shirley
Pete Frost	Dave Dawson (for David Goode)
Susan Davies	George Barker
Gerald Dawe	Helen Shaw
Matthew Wilkinson	Mathew Frith
Grant Luscombe	Shirley Ali Khan (speaker)

APOLOGIES

Peter Shepherd	David Goode
Richard Sharland	Graham Leeks
Gavin Stark	Chris Gordon
David Nicholson-Lord	Carolyn Harrison
David Muir	Matthew Thomas

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Minutes of the last meeting on 12 December 2000 at the offices of The Wildlife Trusts, London, were slightly amended as follows:

- a) Item 5, Topic 4 was amended to note that volunteers were required.
- b) Item 5, Topic 13 was amended by deletion of 'volunteers required'.

The minutes were then signed as a correct record.

3 PRESENTATION BY PROFESSOR SHIRLEY ALI KHAN, FROM SUSTAINABILITY FIRST, ON THE URBAN RENAISSANCE SKILLS PROGRAMME

Sustainability First is a charity that has been formed to encourage and help professionals recognise the importance of sustainable development. It has made a number of recommendations to the government including the development of a national plan to increase sustainable development skills and knowledge. Urban developmental professionals would be targeted, including builders, engineers and architects, and a higher education programme would be beneficial. A bid has been submitted to Department of the Environment to develop a 'national skills plan', which comprises a number of elements: assessment of barriers to urban development;

looking at existing practice in professional institutions and providing support in improving these practices; and the need for national recognition for sustainable competencies.

Shirley needs help to identify what the learning needs for these development professionals are, and how to incorporate biodiversity. It would be beneficial to work with a peer group of experts. Shirley has spoken to 15 potential institutions, and has received a warm response. It was stated that MAB would welcome the opportunity to work with Sustainability First. Shirley would be grateful to use MAB as a sounding board for the development of specifications, ensuring that biodiversity is incorporated, and also to gain access to networks via the members' organisations.

A national survey was carried out to find out the perception of sustainable development across different professions involved in development. It was found that the perception differed according to the profession; certain organisations understand the principles but could not offer solutions, and others could offer solutions, despite having little grasp of the principles. Some organisations favour social development over environmental development.

Sustainability First's initial conference, entitled 'Sustainable development professionals – who needs them?' was held on 5 February, and had an attendance of 110 delegates, which is very encouraging.

The need to establish a sustainable development profession was pointed out. Ideally someone is needed to liaise at Board level. The ideal candidate would have high level communication skills, be an excellent facilitator, and ideally have demonstrable personal commitment to sustainable development.

John Box pointed out that the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) are the main regeneration vehicles, and have money to spend, but spend a minimum on environmental issues. He suggested that to concentrate on getting the RDAs on board would be very beneficial. John also suggested talking to the Institute of Directors and Confederation of British Industry.

Peter Frost is Chair of the Inter Agency Working Group, and will inform members of the programme.

John Box offered support from the Urban Forum for the Urban Renaissance Skills Programme and said that the Forum would be willing to assist with the development of specifications for professionals in respect of urban biodiversity issues in the broadest sense. On behalf of the Forum, John thanked Shirley for an interesting presentation which developed into a lively and stimulating discussion. An invitation was made to Shirley for a further presentation in 12 months time.

4 APPROVAL OF ANNUAL REPORT 2000/2001

Peter Frost has revised his paper for *Town & Country Planning* which is based on the Urban Forum comments sent to the DETR Review of Biosphere Reserves.

ACTION: Christine French to distribute revised paper with minutes

The Annual Report for 2000/2001 was approved.

ACTION: Christine French to send to EN and CCW.

5 CONFIRMATION OF WORK PROGRAMME 2001/02

The work programme was approved with a few alterations:

5.1 Review of social and community criteria for selection of Local SINC's

Pete Frost to lead, with involvement from Mathew Frith, Dave Dawson and Celia Spouncer (to be confirmed).

5.2 Identification of benefits for mental health and well-being from urban greenspace

Susan Davies to lead, with involvement from Ian Douglas and Celia Spouncer (to be confirmed).

5.3 Development of Urban Forum web site

Helen Shaw asked members what they wanted from the web site and who the target audience should be. It was suggested that a link to practitioners, ALGE, and the main agencies should be the core audience.

Helen Shaw suggested creating an additional web page for each section of the work programme, where progress may be reported, and colleagues may post comments

ACTION: all topic leaders to write paragraph explaining their topic, for posting on the web site

ACTION: all members to inform HS who the 'web master' is in their organisation

5.4 Integrated European Research programme on the urban and peri-urban environment

Possible involvement from Celia Spouncer

5.5 Explore funding sources for the work of the Urban Forum

Susan Davies said that SNH would be willing to explore the possibility of funds being made available for the development of the Urban Wildlife Award and other projects.

5.6 Integrating biodiversity into new developments

Matthew Thomas to lead the topic, with assistance from Susan Davies, Mathew Frith and Pete Frost.

5.7 MAB Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence

Discussions during the meeting and afterwards resulted in joint leadership by Chris Gordon and George Barker with assistance from Susan Davies.

6 FINANCES OF THE URBAN FORUM

6.1 Proposals for using funds available 2001/02:

- Print volume of all papers written by MAB over past few years.
Decided against as papers are available on the web site.
- Contribution to a one day workshop in London on biodiversity and brownfield sites.
Decided against as it currently lacks a national perspective and there are alternative sources of funding.
- Contribution to the URGENT annual meeting to be held in April 2001.
Decided against as the planning for this meeting was advanced at this stage. To be involved in the 2002 meeting along with EuroMAB.
- Contribute to two workshops on urban metabolism in Herefordshire led by Gerald Dawe.
Decided against as they have a local focus rather than a national one.

ACTION: Gerald Dawe to speak to Richard Lloyd of the Countryside Agency, who is also on the UK-MAB Committee, in respect of funding the above workshops.

6.2 MAB Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence

Susan Davies said that SNH may be interested in contributing funding to this project.

6.3 Integrating biodiversity into new developments

Susan Davies said that SNH may be interested in contributing funding to this project.

6.4 Mathew Frith stated that EN may put resources into an integrated biodiversity project.

- 6.5 John Box** proposed using the monies from EN and CCW to both support the work of the Urban Forum and its meetings and to develop the MAB Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence. It was agreed that this should be pursued with the Wildlife Trusts on the basis of around one person for one day a week.

7 REPORT OF UK-MAB COMMITTEE MEETING JANUARY 2001

Mike Roberts, Chair of the UK-MAB Committee, will be stepping down. It was pointed out that the relationship between the UK-MAB Committee and the UK UNESCO Commission needs to be explored and strengthened.

8 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

- 4.3 MAB Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence.** To be developed as a Project in 2001/02 with George Barker as Topic Leader.
- 4.4 Recombinant Ecology.** Printing and distribution of proceedings of workshop completed with assistance from English Nature and the continuing involvement by George Barker.
- 4.6 Urban Biosphere Reserves.** Pete Frost to continue editing the Forum response to DETR Review of Urban Biosphere Reserves for publication in *Town & Country Planning*.
- 4.7 Carbon Sequestration in Urban Forestry.** Gerald Dawe to revise the paper, to obtain input from Forum members, and to decide whether and how this should be published.
- 4.8 Urban White Paper.** Peter Shirley has taken soundings and any response will be through involvement in conferences and seminars rather than by written comments.
- 4.9 Urban Parks and Semi-Natural Open Spaces.** Comments on draft paper still required by Peter Shirley & Chris Gordon.
- 6 DETR Local Sites Review Group.** John Box will continue to pursue how the Forum can be involved with Kevin Charman (English Nature).
- 8** Helen Shaw has posted George Barker's paper 'EuroMAB work in urban areas' on web site.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 9.1 Gerald Dawe** requested the use of an alternative venue in Birmingham because of the ethical issues in having meetings in offices supported by an oil company (Shell). It was agreed that Carr's Lane Church Centre would in future be used.

9.2 Mathew Frith suggested inviting a speaker from Groundwork to the September meeting.

9.3 Peter Jarvis proposed inviting Penny Angold to join the Forum.

ACTION: John Box to ask Carolyn Harrison to look at procedures for joining.

9.4 Pete Frost is now a full member of the Forum and was thanked for his role in obtaining financial contribution from CCW.

10 DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETINGS

ALL MEETINGS 12 FOR 12.30 PM

17 May 2001 – CURE Manchester (Mathew Wilkinson & John Handley)

5 September 2001 – Groundwork, Birmingham (Richard Sharland)

December 2001 – London (Dave Dawson)

Early March 2002 – Carr's Lane Church Centre, Birmingham

15 May 2002 – National Wildflower Centre, Manchester (Grant Luscombe – contact Lucinda)