



**Minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2001 at Groundwork,  
Birmingham.**

**PRESENT**

Ian Angus	SNH
George Barker	Independent Consultant
John Box	(Chair) Wardell Armstrong
Chris Gordon	Countryside Agency
Mathew Frith	English Nature
Pete Frost	CCW
John Handley	CURE, university of Manchester
John Ingram	CEH Wallingford
Peter Jarvis	University of Wolverhampton
Graham Leeks	CEH Wallingford
Peter Morgan	Groundwork
Richard Sharland	Groundwork
Helen Shaw	CEH Wallingford
Peter Shirley	The West Midlands Wildlife Trusts
Matthew Thomas	Brighton & Hove Council
Matthew Wilkinson	CURE, university of Manchester

**1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

**Apologies**

Carolyn Harrison  
Grant Luscombe  
David Nicholson-Lord  
Celia Spouncer

Welcome to Ian Angus of Scottish Natural Heritage. Ian replaces Susan Davies and will take on the topic on Metal Health and Well-being. Ian joined SNH as the National Strategy Officer for settlements. He has a background in geography and planning and spent 6 years on community planning and woodlands. Ian sits on the Countryside and Environment Panel.

Resignations have been received from Peter Shepherd and David Muir. This is due to restrictions on time and both remain interested in the work of the forum

The Urban Forum congratulated Carolyn Harrison on her new position as Professor at University College London.

## **2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING ON 17 MAY 2001**

There were no major comments or corrections for the minutes of the last meeting and they were signed as an accurate record.

## **3. PRESENTATIONS BY RICHARD SHARLAND AND PETER MORGAN (GROUNDWORK)**

Richard Sharland and Peter Morgan from Groundwork were welcomed and gave a presentation on Groundwork.

Richard Sharland is Director of Groundwork, a leading environment and regeneration organisation. Groundwork is a federation of more than 40 local trusts in England Wales and Northern Ireland. The trusts are charitable, and consist a partnership between private and public with work to bring about social, economic and environmental regeneration. The trusts are trying to do joined up work which crosses and interacts between subjects.

Groundwork has a turnover of 65 Million and 1500 staff, and last year Groundwork involved 100,000 Adults, 6,000 businesses, 600 hectares of land and 450 km of cycleway and footpaths. The organisation is now at a significant point in its development and is expanding from a local authority planning background into areas of significant deprivation where groundwork can be effective. Key areas of development for the next 5 years include developing federal systems and culture – how to retain delivery and local partnerships but maximise sharing of knowledge and dissemination.

The purpose of Groundwork is to build sustainable community through joint environmental action. All projects have a number of participating and resourcing partners. Some projects last for up to 15 years.

Groundwork has been working in local neighbourhoods since the 1980s on the urban fringe and more recently in both urban and rural communities. The aim is to build stronger local communities by making people more aware of their surroundings. Through the Changing Places programme Groundwork has developed work on canals and cycle ways etc and developed productive local communities. Recently Groundwork has taken on a new initiative and is now heading a Land Development Unit. This unit aims to examine people and landscape in a federal context. This is something that has not previously been attempted.

Groundwork is also involved in Education and Schools and supports lifelong learning. Current involvement includes working with 2000 schools and assisting with outdoor classroom work and teacher training as well as involvement with many lifelong learning programmes, and the Millennium Award “Environments for Everyone”. Groundwork is also becoming a learning organisation for its staff. Currently it employs 1500 young people at the start of their career therefore training for the future is an important function.

Work with businesses is also important and currently includes work to improve environmental status with much work in supporting SMEs. The organisation has a good record of working with many larger businesses during its 21 year history. Groundwork is also attempting to reduce business waste.

Currently work is being undertaken to explore how to engage small businesses. The issue of how to go into a small business and demonstrate environmental issues and SMEs is important, as is avoiding confrontation between businesses and regulators.

Groundwork is also involved with:

- TRANSCO green futures
- ILMs and community enterprise
- RBS development programme
- NVQ1 in sustainable development
- Youth works (Youth Justice Board)
- Crime and the Environment
- Young Voices
- Play Partnerships
- Community working

For the future of Groundwork Executive Directors of each trust need to be entrepreneurial. There is a plan to extend coverage to 90% of deprived communities and therefore a need to identify places where Groundwork could make a contribution. With this expansion comes a need to: Improve Groundwork strategies and toolkits; improve accountability and sharing and; build and renew partnerships.

The two major “Skis” for Groundwork are sustainable development of environment and landscape, and, community neighbourhood regeneration and social justice. The organisation needs to retain this balance at a policy level. In the last few years Groundwork has moved away from its environmental roots. There is a need to examine this balance. The government has seen a need for neighbourhood based community regeneration, but has moved away from the environmental regeneration objectives. Intermediary bodies in this work are therefore vital.

The new government structure has meant that whilst most organisations are within DEFRA, groundwork is still linked with DLTR and this will effect the way Groundwork can influence joined up government. Environment and regeneration are now effectively separated, as are urban and rural issues. The private sector is also changing. Businesses are recognising that environmental and social actions are part of the business plan. It has yet to be established as to how this will affect Groundwork.

PS asked if the target point was seen differently from within Groundwork. At the root of concerns was a sense that partnerships were tokenistic and not equal and that partners with a lot to contribute could be sidelined. In the early days an organisation has to establish itself and some of the previous criticisms

have been those metered at a young organisation. A few years on Groundwork is managing its relationships better. Understanding the problems of initiating partnerships is different from the inside.

MF agreed that he has seen some improvements in trying to link with English Nature, but acknowledged that some Groundwork trusts are only now beginning to develop and problems with younger trusts often occur with linkages to LAs who have different views and concerns.

Groundwork has however learned a lot about relationships and this may be helped by the new regional organisations. At a regional level it is more possible to support not just the trust, the partners. Groundwork is committed to getting a regional manager in every area of England, and a team in places where there are many trusts.

MT asked what is the difference between the Groundwork role and the LA role. What are the advantages of using the trust?

Some LAs see this as a way of increasing resources, but there are things that no LA can do – perceptions of LAs in deprived neighbourhoods are often bad with corporate baggage. Groundwork has an ability to be innovative and have a different viewpoint. The trust is always established however with full support of the local authority.

PF Groundwork raises interesting issues of democracy and how this is working. The LA should represent democracy but Groundwork seems to have some freedoms and is run by a board so how is the democracy of Groundwork seen?

Groundwork is an intermediary organisation which can help instigate change. The majority of trusts are not owned by the community, but act as a facilitator and once the skills to regenerate are gained by the community Groundwork should step back.

Peter Morgan has been with Groundwork for 13 years and 6 years with Groundwork UK. In the last month he has been looking at federation strategy for Land. He has a background in countryside management and natural science.

The Changing Places Projects is a large-scale £57 million programme of derelict land reclamation. It receives Millennium lotteries funding as well as local Groundwork Trust and European funding. There are 21 individual projects within the programme with over 1000 hectares area distributed through England and Wales.

The Post Industrial Landscape by John Handley showed that degraded land was a real blight on communities. By and large derelict land was not reducing although areas moved and types of decay changed. The report demonstrated that other methods of regeneration were required and Changing Place

Programme was initiated. The Ecological Approach at St Helens formed the basis of changing places.

Solutions to derelict land within the Programme have mainly been green amenity, but there has also been care to assess the appropriate level of intervention and make use of natural regeneration. Some projects need higher intervention e.g. and engineering approach to rivers. These can be used to create positive amenities such as a canoe slalom course in a river control system. Local needs are taken into account as in Stoke on Trent where a scheme to replant an area with new woodland was adapted after the community decided that it just wanted a safe and secure natural site.

The key features of the programme have been:

- Community involvement
- Delivery in an ecologically informed manner
- Endowment Funding
- Long term Management Plans
- Formal Designation
- Linkage to a Local Authority
- Revenue Programme
- Land Ownership
- Capable of endurance – e.g. a 99 year time horizon

The legacy of Changing Places is:

- A deed of dedication with 94 years to run on the projects
- An EU LIFE funded guide to best practice
- Toolkits for community led regeneration of derelict land available on The web at [www.ecoregn.com](http://www.ecoregn.com)
- A Geographic Environmental Monitoring System to be rolled out

As well as involvement with the Land Regeneration Trust Concept developed by John Handley. Groundwork has been developing this concept since 1995. Since September 2000 Groundwork and English Partnerships have been working closely together but there is still a need to involve the UK as a whole.

Market testing by an independent consultant has underscored support for the concept; and need for the Land Regeneration Trust. There is now an outline working model; although there are still some hurdles such as formal DLTR and Treasury support. The trust is aspiring to launch in April 2002.

JI suggested that collaboration with CEH would be possible over the roll out of the GEMS. JI said that there were many DGs in Europe, and there may be opportunities for joint funding.

**ACTION 3.1**      **JI** to provide RS/PM with a name within CEH for GIS link for possible collaboration with roll out of GEMS.

PS pointed out that the Land Regeneration trust may sit with DCMS. He encouraged a consideration of other parts of government both to widen the net, and as it is not entirely clear how the trust would relate to DLTR.

JB said that a number of Urban Forum work topics funded by EN, CCW and SNH would be interesting to the wider community. Closer links with Groundwork should be fostered by topic leaders.

**ACTION 3.2**      **Topic leaders** to consider Groundwork relevance and invite help from Groundwork to broaden topics.

**ACTION 3.3**      **RS and PM** to name possible groundwork employees who could contribute, and to suggest new topics for the Urban Forum Work Programme.

#### **4      PREPARATION OF URBAN FORUM AWARD SITES FOR POSSIBLE VISIT BY URGENT/EUROMAB IN APRIL 2002.**

GL said that the URGENT programme was still in the process of organising the Annual Meeting in Birmingham for April 2002. There are still aims to have a joint meeting with EuroMAB to promote the Urban Biosphere Reserve Concept. This meeting is aimed to also include the ESF who are interested in promoting urban science as a Forward Look. NERC has written to the ESF to support this.

The meeting will provide an excellent platform for the Urban Forum to present its function to a wider community and Europe. There is also an opportunity to use one or two of the Urban Forum Award Sites as Field visits to promote discussion. Saltwells or Project Kingfisher could be good choices.

To do this it is important for the Urban Forum to contact the award sites and prepare them for the visit. CG has already been working with the LWT on this, and should continue to do this in advance of the April meeting.

One suggestion for a discussion topic is to develop a metadata form for use on the sites and hopefully in other sites developed Europe-wide in the future.

PS suggested that characterisation of the sites may come from applying the 'environmental capital' approach.

It was suggested that some managers of demonstration sites may also like to be involved in the meeting input. Also Groundwork could have an involvement.

**ACTION 4.4**      **Urban Forum** to inform JI/GL of any URGENT EuroMAB meeting programme suggestions via GB.

**ACTION 4.5**      **CG** to get in touch with site managers and prepare sites for URGENT EuroMAB meeting field visits, working with the LWT.

**ACTION 4.6**     **JB** to ensure that Urban Forum involvement in the URGENT EuroMAB meeting programme is taken forward in an agenda item at the December meeting.

**5.     PROGRESS ON WORK PROGRAMME 2001/2**

JB said that the work programme would next be updated in November and he would be grateful for any updates in advance of this

**ACTION 5.7**     **All Work Topic Leaders** to send updates on progress to JB by November

**5a.    INTEGRATING BIODIVERSITY INTO NEW DEVELOPMENTS**

MT Circulated a paper as an example of a possible series of information notes designed to help planners incorporate environmental design. This is looking very much at the coalface of Urban Forum practical problems. The example was a paper on swift nesting structures in housing developments.

MT said that he was aware that whilst we may have the correct policies in place the policies will not be put into practice unless planners can easily understand and implement them. The vision therefore is to have short guidance notes in paper form, and more detailed information on the Urban Forum web site.

PF said that this idea is ideal for CCW Nature at Home Projects. However for funding specific items CCW usually goes to competitive tender and also requires bilingual editions, which can increase the cost.

GB added a cautionary note – once embarked upon this must be maintained. This can be more difficult with broader issues. Also some users such as the House Builders federation would find this too complicated and require just an A4 one pager. There is a need to consider these problems.

MF agreed with this concern. It is difficult to prepare content at the right technical level. EN has experience of this and has found that businesses need very non-technical information. Basic points and sign boarding is a possible way forward. A leaflet and pointers to further information on the web could help with this.

MW felt that this was an excellent and much needed idea. Local area officers who need to object to plans can also use the leaflets to explain reasons for the objection in simple terms.

RS said that the idea was interesting but that the language could be improved. Another way of encouraging use of the information is through economic advantage. If house builders can gain competitive advantage through quality, this could be encouraged. Also in the Social Housing sector builders are in a

different relationship and this could be a good point for social quality in social housing. Chris Baines may be a good facilitator for HBF.

MT said that he was already speaking to the SE development agency, and JB advised him to also speak to strategic land managers.

JH also felt that an audience was a potential champion for the project. Armed with this information they could then pressurise developers to include environmental benefits.

MT also needs to see if help can be attained with the technical drawings. Through the trusts or agencies. MF also suggested trying the RSPB for support.

**ACTION 5.8** MT to take the Information papers for planners idea forward with caution. Firstly provide a copy of the current example for inclusion on the web site. Then publicise and tell champions about the information, and think carefully about house builders and who to involve.

**5b. THE URBAN FORUM WEB SITE – PROGRESS AND REQUESTS FOR INPUT.**

The web site has now been rolled out, but topic leaders need to check and correct information on their topics.

It was agreed that the minutes should be available on the web from now on.

There needs to be some work done on the award site pages. The metadata available on each site could be improved, and more information about site research and study topics included.

All comments on the web site and items for inclusion should be directed through Matthew Wilkinson until a replacement webmaster is recruited within CEH.

**ACTION 5.9** All to check web content and send suggestions via MW.

**ACTION 5.10** Topic leaders to provide topic content for the web if they have not done so already.

**5c. PROGRESS ON THE URBAN WILDLIFE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE**

CG has news from the LWT that they would like to progress on the Urban Wildlife Award for excellence. There will be a £500 + VAT charge for the research.

This seems a good way to drive the project forward in advance of the URGENT meeting.



**ACTION 5.11** CG to arrange with the LWT to work on the Urban Wildlife Awards for Excellence.

There is a Scottish Parks Paper which may be useful.

**ACTION 5.12** IA to give CG the details of the Scottish Parks Paper.

**6. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING.**

**ACTION 3.1:** Is to be taken forward

**ACTION 6.13** **John Box** to work with **John Handley** to develop better linkages and integration between the Urban Forum and CURE.

**ACTION 3.2:** Is to be taken forward.

**ACTION 6.14** **JH** to ask Emyr Poole of English Partnerships to talk to the Urban Forum on December 5<sup>th</sup> in addition to David Goode.

PS said that Chris Baines is working on the rebuilding biodiversity Initiative and he could be invited to share ideas. Chris Baines is also involved in Land Reclamation in Groundwork

**ACTION 6.15** **JB** to consider asking Chris Baines to a future meeting.

**ACTION 3.4:** CURE Management Programme is involved in 3 areas and can be a hub for sustainable city regions in other areas. CURE would like to network with the Urban Forum and probably link in to Europe

**ACTION 3.5:** There is now a real opportunity to do this as the NWDA want major projects following publication of the Land Reclamation Review. JH would need a short report and could probably use the Town and Country Planning Article by PF

**ACTION 3.6:** This will be taken forward in future discussion meeting by DEFRA on November 7<sup>th</sup>. Reporting on behalf of the Biodiversity Research Advisory Group. JH is to try to get the biodiversity fed in.

**7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**7a. URBAN FORUM MEMBERSHIP**

Carolyn Harrison has circulated a proposed criteria and any objections should be raised to JB otherwise this will be incorporated.

**ACTION 7.16** All to check criteria for membership paper from Carolyn Harrison and notify JB of any concerns.

There is a new proposal from PS that Penny Angold should be invited to join the Urban Forum.

**ACTION 7.17** PJ to Propose Penny Angold as a new member in time for the December Meeting.

**7b. ANNIVERSARY EVENT FOR MAB**

JJ noted that it is the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of MAB and suggestions for a public lecture on urban science topic would be welcome. The RGS may include this in its lecture programme and there has been interest in hosting this in the North West Division. Is there support here to take back to the committee?

MAB would like the meeting to take place in November or early December and it has been suggested to ask Chris Baines to speak.

JH said that there is an event taking place for the launch of the LIFE project on 28-30 November with a meeting of the International Brownfields Exchange. This may be a suitable venue for the MAB lecture, but the venue has not yet been finalised.

JH also suggested Tony Bradshaw as a speaker as it is likely that Chris Baines will be away.

**ACTION 7.18** JH to send contact details of Tony Bradshaw to JJ

**7c. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH MEETING (WITH URGENT)**

There is to be a meeting at Imperial College on Urban Environment and Health looking at the interface between environment and health and mechanisms for ensuring interactive research work. Urban Forum Members are welcome to attend.

Ian Angus and MF expressed interest in this.

JH suggested that Ian Barrett's paper could be windowed at the meeting

**ACTION 7.19** UF Members to ask GL if they would like to attend the Environmental Health meeting.

**ACTION 7.20** GL to send details of Environmental Health Meeting to IA and MF

**8. DATES OF NEXT MEETING**

5 December 2001	(Room AG21 Greater London Authority, Marsham Street)
26 February 2002	(Carrs Lane, Church Centre, Birmingham)
15 May 2002	(National Wildflower Centre, Liverpool)