



Minutes of the UK MAB Urban Forum meeting held on 26 February 2002 at Carr's Lane Church Centre, Birmingham.

Present

Corinna Bailie	(Secretary) CEH Wallingford
George Barker	Independent Consultant
John Box	(Chair) Wardell Armstrong
Christine Bradley	National Urban Forestry Unit
Dave Dawson	Greater London Authority
Pete Frost	Countryside Council for Wales
Chris Gordon	East Midlands Region, Countryside Agency
John Ingram	UK MAB Committee Secretary, CEH Wallingford
Peter Jarvis	University of Wolverhampton
Grant Luscombe	Landlife, National Wildflower Centre
David Nicholson-Lord	Independent Consultant
Peter Shirley	The West Midlands Wildlife Trusts
Celia Spouncer	Independent Consultant
John Robbins	DEFRA
Jenny Wilson	DEFRA

1. Apologies and Welcome

Penny Angold
Ian Angus
Peter Cush
Gerald Dawe
Ian Douglas
Mathew Frith
David Goode
John Handley
Carolyn Harrison
Graham Leeks
Nadia Little
Richard Sharland
Matthew Thomas

Welcome to Christine Bradley who has joined the Forum and to Celia Spouncer.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes were signed as an accurate record.

3. Development of the MAB Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence

An overhead slide was shown detailing the steps to be made and paper copies circulated. (Annex 1)

Part 3 is to be completed by 20 March 2002. This will then be circulated for it to be used at the URGENT conference in April.

Interviewees are currently being selected (internal, external and various receivers of the award) bearing in mind the geographical coverage.

London Wildlife Trusts are contributing £500 worth of work time while the Forum will be adding £500 plus VAT from the 2001/2002 budget. Chris Gordon and John Box will authorise payment once the work produced has been completed.

Pete Frost informed the Forum that Wales are currently looking to pilot the Green Flag award, and that the Forum's Award will be a useful comparison.

The Forum needs to identify the Award's specialist role in order to expand the capacity for giving the Award. Only five site Awards can be made a year due to a lack of resources.

Action 3.1 Chris Gordon to arrange for Graham Turnbull of London Wildlife Trusts to attend 17 May 2002 meeting.

4. Discussion on Chris Gordon and Peter Shirley's paper: All things to all people – Parks and Semi-natural Open Spaces in 21st Century Britain

Pete Frost found the paper interesting and thought the paper would relate to the Urban Country Parks in Wales. He also suggested the possibility of a professional editor to cast an eye over the paper.

Chris Gordon and Peter Shirley agreed with the majority of feedback they had received. They wish to finalise the paper in time for the Urban Greenspaces Task Force meeting (27 February 2002).

Peter Shirley re-iterated that this paper would be very important to the Urban Greenspace Task Force. The paper is to be networked rather than published. If an editor is to be brought in they must be aware that it is a multi-use document. Chris Gordon informed the meeting that the December 2001 draft is currently being used by Groundwork.

Christine Bradley wants to circulate the paper around her organisation. The Natural Urban Forestry Unit has good growing links with DTLR which will assist in establishing links with the Forum.

Grant Luscombe stated that there is a definite need for the paper. However, it must have further updates added, as some of the information is out of date (for example, Dave Dawson mentioned that the CCT is over).

Action 4.1 Dave Dawson to pass further comments on the paper to Chris Gordon and Peter Shirley.

David Nicholson Lord thought that the paper is a good summary. He suggested that the recommendations need to go further and should be put across harder. The question arose of how and in what form? Peter Shirley did not wish to restructure the paper and wants to distribute the paper when appropriate and adapt it to the particular individual to whom it is to be issued.

George Barker suggested that a future project should stem from this paper. A different approach should be taken, as this paper is too long. It should be split into background and discussion. The discussion side should be short and hard-hitting as well as argumentative.

David Nicholson Lord is particularly interested in the Brownfields side and wants the point to be made more of. A positive image needs to be created.

David Nicholson-Lord suggested that the recommendations need more depth. The recommendation should be put in bold as the top line to draw people's attention and an accompanying note put in underneath to start a discussion.

The recommendations of the paper were discussed in detail:

Recommendation 1. Agreed this is fine.

Recommendation 2. David Nicholson-Lord wanted to know about the standards for the provision of open spaces and the need to refer back to the Box and Harrison standards. George Barker suggested using John Handley's work. Accessibility had not been included in the paper; Dave Dawson's colleague and Carolyn Harrison brought this point up.

Recommendation 3. David Nicholson-Lord drew attention to the political debate. Local friends groups have been handed over a budget for parks. Dave Dawson stated that user groups are the key to this. However, Local Authorities are wary of budgets being given to the local people. Peter Shirley drew the meeting's attention to the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. Various people are needed to assist the local people and form Community Groups. John Robbins stressed that someone needs to show the building up of a commitment otherwise budgets will not be handed over.

Recommendation 4. This needs to be improved by bringing in specific references. A name needs to be given to enable it to carry more impact and a direct quote put in. The government may reconsider if it comes from a response committee rather than a task force. Pete Frost advised to only keep the recommendation in if quoting from a report. He would like to see the paper in Wales but it must be clear on where the quote originates. John Box enquired whether the paper is directed at England to which Chris Gordon confirmed this. If the paper is to be taken to other nations, local editors must be brought in to adapt it. Peter Shirley explained that due to this, the title had been made fairly loose. General principals are being addressed and not country differences, this needs to be added in to the introduction. Grant Luscombe stressed that it is important to create a new Agency and to form a link to the Treasury.

Recommendation 5. This is with regards to the Best Value that is monitored by the Audit Commission. Pete Frost believes that the recommendation must be expanded to cover this and to show this in the short term. Peter Shirley agreed that the recommendation should be changed to take account of the issues highlighted in the document.

Recommendation 6. Dave Dawson commented that this was vague but generally true. Pete Frost questioned what the underlying idea was and what was it intended to achieve? Chris Gordon replied that there was no standard and there had been no circulation of good information for a baseline. However there has been good data and examples of best practice. The recommendation should be part of a remit of a new agency to build on. It was suggested that this recommendation be put under the supporting text for Recommendation 4 leaving only five concise recommendations.

Peter Shirley and Chris Gordon agreed to consider all the points made in the discussion, but emphasised the impracticability of incorporating them all without a major rewrite.

The Forum is to sign off the paper once the up dated recommendations have been circulated round the membership. Chris Gordon stressed that the focus should be on agreeing the recommendations and signing them off and to take further acceptance as silence.

Action 4.2 Peter Shirley and Chris Gordon to update the paper as per the discussion and forward to the Urban Forum Secretary.

Action 4.3 The Urban Forum Secretary to circulate the updated paper to the Urban Forum membership for approval.

In terms of taking the paper forward and disseminating the ideas, Peter Shirley would like the paper to go in to policy and consultation documents in the government and influence government policy.

John Box committed the Forum to a maximum of £150 towards getting the paper professionally edited. If it is more, the paper should be written for individual journals instead.

Action 4.4 Pete Frost to find out rates for a professional editor and inform John Box as soon as possible.

It was noted that the paper is designed for web site use and could be used as an Executive Summary for those involved in issues to do with natural or semi-natural Urban Environments.

- ILAM would be an obvious channel as they would circulate to Park Managers
- the paper could be linked with the judging of the Green Flag award.

John Robbins stated that these issues have now been taken over by DTLR following the reorganisation of DETR. Due to this John Robbins is unable to represent the Forum in this respect. He suggested the Forum should make contact with DTLR regarding Urban Greenspaces. However John Robbins can give a list of contacts and will try to encourage DTLR to engage with the Forum

Action 4.5 John Box and John Robbins to establish contacts with DTLR regarding Urban Greenspaces

John Box thanked Chris Gordon and Peter Shirley for all of their hard work.

5. Verbal Reports and updates for the 2001/2002 Work Programme

Topic 1 – Development of the MAB Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence

See Item 3 of these Minutes.

Topic 2 – Recombinant ecology: Exploration of the practical implications of exotic species in urban floras and faunas in relation to native communities

Other conferences had been arranged over the year. George Barker proposed that this topic should now be dropped as it has helped spark a Global workshop and the message is spreading successfully.

Topic 3 – Urban Biosphere Reserves: extending the concept of biosphere reserves to urban areas

Pete Frost reported that *Ecology* are not prepared to re-print the article. It was suggested that English Nature are approached for the new 'Urban Wildlife News'. Christine Bradley also proposed that the Urbio newsletter would be another good outlet.

Topic 4 – Review of social and community criteria for selection of Local Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation

The draft guidance has been published and there was much discussion on this. Pete Frost extended the Urban Forum's offer for help to DEFRA and John Robbins informed the meeting on behalf of DEFRA that the offer had been noted. Dave Dawson said that there is a wealth of knowledge and experience available about local sites. John Robbins stated that the draft is not intended to be prescriptive. The next steps should be for DEFRA to consider in the light of all the responses to the consultation process, whether a seminar or conference would be useful.

Action 5.1 **John Robbins** to forward a copy of DEFRA's draft paper to the Urban Forum Secretary for circulation round the Urban Forum.

Action 5.2 **All** to forward their comments on DEFRA's draft paper to Jenny Wilson.

Action 5.3 **Jenny Wilson and Pete Frost** to discuss a possible seminar or conference once the Forum's comments, and those of all other respondees, have been reviewed by DEFRA.

Topic 5 – Carbon Sequestration in urban forestry

Gerald Dawe is to continue this project into the 2002/2003 work programme.

Topic 6 – Urban Parks and Semi-natural Open Spaces

See item 4 in these minutes.

Topic 7 – Identification of benefits for mental health and well-being from Urban Greenspace

Ian Angus is to continue this project into the 2002/2003 work programme.

Topic 8 – Development of Urban Forum web site

The Urban Forum web site has had a hit counter installed that is able to generate extensive reports on the use of the site. The top user of the site that is currently listed is the United States of America, closely following by the United Kingdom. John Ingram reported that at a recent meeting he had attended, a colleague from the United States had expressed a great interest in the work that the Urban Forum is doing. He also extended an invitation to anyone from the Forum who may be visiting the United States to give a talk on the Urban Forum (for further details please contact John Ingram).

Action 5.4 The Urban Forum Secretary to circulate a general report from the Hit Counter to members of the Forum.

Topic 9 – Integrated European Research Programme on the Urban and Peri-Urban Environment

As detailed in January 2002 update of the 2001/2002 work programme.

Topic 10 – Explore funding sources for the work of the Urban Forum

John Box confirmed that English Nature and the Countryside Council for Wales are likely to fund the Urban Forum again in 2002/03.

Topic 11 – Contribution to UK-MAB Committee

See item 7 in these minutes.

Topic 12 – Integrating biodiversity into new developments

Matthew Thomas is to continue this project into the 2002/2003 work programme.

David Nicholson-Lord circulated examples of the pocket books that he is currently working on. He informed the meeting that he is currently looking for further topics to be covered in these pocket books and would welcome any suggestions from the Forum. For further details please contact David.

6. Discussion on the draft Work Programme for 2002/2003

Pete Frost confirmed that the Urban Biosphere Reserves topic is to continue and he is looking at producing a guidance draft for the summer. The topic will be resolved at the end of the next financial year. He also suggested that there maybe an extra topic to be added that stems from Wales.

John Robbins informed the meeting that DTLR had taken over the work streams of the Urban Agenda. John Ingram stated that Brian Marker from DTLR is attending the ESF part of the URGENT conference being held in April. Therefore this would be a useful time to establish

contact between the Urban Forum and DTLR. Christine Bradley also suggested that it would be worth establishing a link to Genie Turton, from Housing at DTLR.

Pete Frost informed the meeting that as CCW's funding representative for the Forum he is always on the look out for cutting edge topics and is very keen for the Forum to consider this.

7. Report from 8 February 2002 UK MAB Committee Meeting

A report of the meeting was circulated round the Forum prior to the meeting. Another funding possibility for the Forum through Richard Lloyd at the Countryside Agency is currently being explored.

8. Progress update on the URGENT Science week (8-13 April 2002)

John Ingram circulated the URGENT science week's Agenda (including the ESF part) with application form and information pamphlet around.

He confirmed that the funding for the week is all in place including a very welcome contribution from DEFRA. A rolling programme is being developed with a strong slant towards ESF's 'Forward Look' programme. EuroMAB including the USA are involved. There has been a good response, so far, from the Europeans.

George Barker outlined his plans for the Friday morning session and the field trip. The idea is to show people how we develop the mechanism and results. There will be a series of presentations starting with a 20 minutes general overview. Background discussion papers will be distributed to initiate active discussions. He suggested that the main topics should be on: the development of the MAB Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence, and the Parks and Semi-natural Open Spaces side. The Biosphere Reserves would link with EuroMAB and should spark a long discussion. The Chairman at the meeting will headline the topics. John Parry (a Site person) from Lewes LNR will be asked for his assistance.

Action 8.1 **George Barker** to ensure that an annotated Agenda is made available to Graham Leeks with a copy issued to Katie Dodsley by 15 March 2002.

9. Membership proposals for Alan Scott and Christine Bradley

Corinna Bailie has issued a membership application form and requested Alan Scott's CV. He has yet to reply. Once a response has been received the application will be circulated throughout the Forum by e-mail for approval and acceptance.

John Box formally welcomed Christine Bradley to the Urban Forum.

John Box proposed that future memberships are to be approved and accepted by e-mail rather than being held until the next meeting of the Forum. The meeting accepted the proposal.

Action 9.1 **Urban Forum Secretary** to send Christine Bradley a membership acceptance letter.

10. Proposed Archive policy for Urban Forum paperwork

John Box proposed that:

- All signed Minutes
- All Grant Letters
- All applications correspondence for the MAB Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence
- All Contracts
- All Publications and Papers

be kept from when the Urban Forum started. Any general correspondence that does not fall under the above categories is to be destroyed after a year.

The publications and papers will be held at the new Urban Forum library that is based at the Centre for Urban Regeneration and Ecology, University of Manchester (contact: Matthew Wilkinson). Electronic copies are to be created, if possible, where only hard copies exist and added to the Urban Forum Web Site. Matthew Wilkinson is currently adding the publications and papers that are currently in the library to the electronic database created by Corinna Bailie. Once completed the database should then be accessible from the publications page on the Web Site.

11. Matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting

Action 3.3 **Richard Sharland and Peter Morgan** to name possible Groundwork representative for Forum and to suggest new topics for the Urban Forum Work Programme.

Action 11.1 John Box and the Urban Forum Secretary to follow up potential Groundwork representative on Urban Forum.

Action 5.8 **Matthew Thomas** 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.

Carried forward to the next Urban Forum meeting.

Action 6.15 **John Box** to consider asking Chris Baines to a future meeting.

Action 11.2 John Box to arrange Chris Baines to do a talk on “*re-building Biodiversity from an Urban point of view*”, at the 17 September 2002 meeting being held at Groundwork, Birmingham.

Action 8.1 **John Archer** to inform the Greater London Authority to suggest names for the URGENT AGM.

Urban Forum Secretary to chase.

12. Any Other Business

12.1 Representation of the Urban Forum

Mathew Frith will give a presentation about the Urban Forum at the DEFRA England Biodiversity Group meeting being held in London on 8 March 2002. This group are preparing a Biodiversity Strategy for England which will include urban issues.

Ian Douglas and Mathew Frith will be representing the Urban Forum at the Urban Ecosystem Workshop being held at UNESCO, Paris on 12-15 March 2002 (organised by Peter Dogse).

12.2 Travel expenses in relation to Urban Forum Meetings

The Urban Forum Funds are required to provide the Secretariat. Members of the Forum are encouraged to seek funding from their employers for travel expenses from meetings. However, it was agreed that where this is not possible, or for members with no organisational backing, the Urban Forum should meet the travel expenses for the particular individuals. **All travel expenses are to be authorised by John Box and Graham Leeks (budget holder at CEH) before payment will be made.**

Action 12.1 John Box and Graham Leeks to produce a formal policy on travel expenses based on the Natural Environment Research Council's standard rates.

12.3 Membership changes

Corinna Bailie announced that she will be leaving CEH during mid to late April on Maternity Leave. CEH are currently recruiting for her replacement.

John Ingram will also be leaving the Forum due to the move of the UK MAB Secretariat to DEFRA.

12.4 Northern Ireland

Celia Spouncer is keen to stay involved with Biodiversity and Sustainable Development. Peter Cush hopes to be more involved from April/May time as the Environment and Heritage Service (Northern Ireland) may have funds available to send a Northern Ireland representative to the Urban Forum meetings. This will open a door to working with the various Councils in Northern Ireland and gathering valuable information and knowledge.

Action 12.2 Peter Cush and Celia Spouncer to discuss establishing Northern Ireland representation on the Forum.

12.5 Pamphlet

Corinna Bailie circulated a rough draft of a new information pamphlet for the Urban Forum.

Action 12.3 All comments on the pamphlet to be sent to the Urban Forum Secretary before 25 March

13. Dates of Next Meetings

15 May 2002 – National Wildflower Centre, Liverpool

17 September 2002 – Groundwork UK, Bennett's Hill, Birmingham

11 December 2002 – To be confirmed

Action List

- Action 3.1** **Chris Gordon** to arrange Graham Turnbull of London Wildlife Trusts to attend 17 May 2002 meeting.
- Action 4.1** **Dave Dawson** to pass further comments on the paper to Chris Gordon and Peter Shirley.
- Action 4.2** **Peter Shirley and Chris Gordon** to update the paper as per the discussion and forward to the Urban Forum Secretary.
- Action 4.3** **Urban Forum Secretary** to circulate the updated paper to the Urban Forum membership for approval.
- Action 4.4** **Pete Frost** to find out rates for a professional editor and inform John Box as soon as possible.
- Action 4.5** **John Box and John Robbins** to establish contacts with DTLR regarding Urban Greenspaces.
- Action 5.1** **John Robbins** to forward a copy of DEFRA's draft paper to the Urban Forum Secretary for circulation round the Urban Forum.
- Action 5.2** **All** to forward their comments on DEFRA's draft paper to Jenny Wilson.
- Action 5.3** **Jenny Wilson and Pete Frost** to discuss a possible seminar or conference once the Forum's comments, and those of all other respondees, have been reviewed by DEFRA.
- Action 5.4** **Urban Forum Secretary** to circulate a general report from the Hit Counter throughout the Forum.
- Action 8.1** **George Barker** to ensure that an annotated Agenda is made available to Graham Leeks with a copy issued to Katie Dodsley by 15 March 2002.
- Action 9.1** **Urban Forum Secretary** to send Christine Bradley a membership acceptance letter.
- Action 11.1** **John Box and the Urban Forum Secretary** to follow up potential Groundwork representative on Urban Forum.

- Action 11.2** **John Box** to arrange Chris Baines to do a talk on re-building Biodiversity from an Urban point of view, at the 17 September 2002 meeting being held at Groundwork, Birmingham.
- Action 12.1** **John Box and Graham Leeks** to produce a formal policy on funding based on the Natural Environment Research Council's standard rates.
- Action 12.2** **Peter Cush and Celia Spouncer** to discuss stronger Northern Ireland representation on the Forum.
- Action 12.3** **All** Comments on the pamphlet to be sent to the Urban Forum Secretary before 25 March

Annex 1

RESEARCH PROJECT TO REVIEW THE URBAN WILDLIFE A W A R D EXCELLENCE PROGRAMME

Initial Research

- ? Some unavoidable delays have occurred which has meant a short postponement in the initial programme. I'm now looking at the end of March 2002 for the 1st draft of the review document.
- ? A list of interviewees has been drawn up.
- ? Research has taken place on where the present scheme 'sits' in relation to similar schemes.

Format of document

Part I: Introduction

- Reasons behind the establishment of the scheme
- Progress to date
- The current scene

Part 2: Award Scheme Review

- Narrative linked to comments from telephone interviews

Part 3: Potential Ways Forward

- Including a short review of potential funding sources

Completion of 1st Draft

29th March 2002

Final document to be supplied in hard copy and electronic versions