



**Minutes of the UK MAB Urban Forum meeting held 9 December 2003 at
The School of Geography, University of Manchester.**

Present

John Box	(JB)	Atkins Environment (Chair)
Peter Cush	(PC)	Environment & Heritage Service
Ian Douglas	(ID)	Manchester University
Pete Frost	(PF)	CCW
Chris Gordon	(CG)	East Midlands Region, Countryside Agency
Grant Luscombe	(GL)	Landlife, National Wildflower Centre
Matt Fry	(MJF)	CEH Wallingford (Secretary)

1. Apologies and Welcome

Apologies

Moira Anderson	(MA)	Graham Leeks	(GJLL)
Ian Angus	(IA)	Peter Morgan	(PM)
John Handley	(JH)	David Nicholson-Lord	(DNL)
Carolyn Harrison	(CH)	Alan Scott	(AS)
Peter Jarvis	(PJ)	Peter Shirley	(PS)
David Knight	(DK)		

JB welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Ian Douglas and the University of Manchester for hosting it.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the September 2003 meeting were signed by JB as an accurate record, following amendments to recognise Moira Anderson as the new DEFRA representative, taking over from John Robbins, and to correct the dates of next year's meetings to 2004.

3. UK MAB Award for Excellence (Led by CG)

CG gave details of a meeting of the Urban Habitat Forum which was held on 5/12/2003 and discussed the issue of the Award for Excellence. In attendance were CG, DK, PF, PC and Ian Angus of SNH. Notes summarising the meeting and a programme schedule for 2003/04 were distributed to Urban Forum members on 8/12/2003.

At the meeting a new approach to the award was suggested. Awards would be given to a project in relation to particular aspects that it excelled in. Each project would have a special "story" that could be told in publications, on the web site or at conferences, workshops etc.. This approach may have much more potential to be of interest to funders who would have a product to focus on. Sites would be given a 'one-off' award

that would praise that site at that moment in time and recognise its particular aspects. An example was Saltwells Wood to be given the award for exceptional work in urban geology, 1993. This focus would allow the award to emphasise the importance of a wide range of aspects of urban greenspace. In addition it would be more amenable to resourcing as the awarded projects would not have to be a definitive list of important and excellent urban biodiversity. The projects would not have to be continually reassessed in order to verify their ongoing qualification, but the award would be fixed at an instance in time. Awards could be given to people, projects and documents as well as just sites. The entire list of awards would demonstrate a matrix of attributes that are important to urban greenspace and biodiversity without being necessarily inclusive. This approach would encourage the Urban Forum to explore aspects of education, health, biodiversity, history, etc. Urban could be defined through the statement 'The award is for projects linked to settlements and related to urbanisation pressures'.

There was general agreement that this was a very positive development. Future development of the award could be built up through both work of the Urban Forum and further bids to the agencies. The difference between the Award for Excellence and the Green Flag was reiterated. The regional spread of sites becomes less important. The award could be given to publications, people, etc. as well as sites. The UNESCO link is very important and a certificate should be developed to be given to all awarded sites.

For now sites being re-reviewed should be approached in a manner appropriate to the changed emphasis – concentrating on the 'story' aspects.

Action 3.1: MJF to ask JB, PJ and IA to consider this for Severn, Kingfisher and Jupiter respectively and to gather information by 15th January

Future sites still required in NI, Scotland and Wales.

Action 3.2: PC, PF and GL to produce summary of 'story' and attributes of potential candidates in NI, Cwm Talwg (Wales) and Northwood SRB, Kirkby by 15th January

Action 3.3: CG to write 1 side summary of award, including new approach, for 15th January

Action 3.4: MJF to collate all information for 25th January for presentation at next meeting on 25th February

4. New York conference on Biosphere Reserves (led by PF)

In October 2003, PF and DK attended the New York Biospheres and Society conference in New York. Representatives from many countries discussed Urban Biosphere Reserves. A poster explaining the UK MAB Urban Forum was displayed and created interest. The poster is on the website at:

www.ukmaburbanforum.org.uk/pubs.htm

This will be revised to remove the references to this specific conference so that Urban Forum members can use it to raise the profile at future events where appropriate.

Criteria for designation of Urban Biosphere Reserves were discussed. Other types of Biosphere Reserves have no specific criteria so this would be a concrete development

in the designation and protection of Urban Biosphere Reserves, as once criteria have been agreed, the onus will be on MAB to accept the designation of areas meeting the criteria. The MAB Urban Group on Urban Biosphere Reserves of which DK is a member will be developing these criteria. PF is also involved in this. A report from a MAB Urban Group meeting during the NY conference is available on the internet: <http://www.unesco.org/mab/urban/news.htm>

A report on the conference is also available: <http://www.earthinstitute.columbia.edu/cubes/events/UBSReport.htm>

There is also a UNESCO MAB Urban discussion forum on the internet which seems very good, diverse and regularly updated: <http://www.unesco.org/cgi-ubb/forumdisplay.cgi?action=topics&number=6>

Action 4.1: PF to write 1 side summary on ‘What is an Urban Biosphere Reserve’ and email to MJF by 25 January in order to circulate before next meeting

Action 4.2: MJF to revise the poster to remove references to New York so that members can advertise the work of the Urban Forum

5. C A B E

The September meeting explained the work of C A B E. The February meeting will be at C A B E in London. This will be an opportunity for the Urban Forum to gain an understanding of the work of C A B E and vice versa. The agenda should be planned in order to assist this. John Rouse will present the work of C A B E. Julia Thrift to be invited to present the work of C A B E Space. Agenda items to include presentation of the Award for Excellence and the future direction, discussion of UNESCO Urban Biosphere Reserve work, ID’s work on Health and Human Dimensions of Greenspace.

Action 5.1: MJF and PF to coordinate invitation to Julia Thrift

Action 5.2: MJF to notify PS of this

Action 5.3: MJF to circulate papers by 25th January

6. Work Programme

Planning for climate change in urban environments and An assessment of the capacity of Local Authorities to undertake integrated management of greenspace networks
JH working on this.

Change in biodiversity in relation to climate change
No progress by PF. Reconsider early next year.

Response of urban pest species to climate change
ID distributed report. Much work ongoing, particularly UKCIP paper cited in report. Hard to disentangle various factors including: Changes in physical potential of areas that pests may inhabit, human behaviour that leads to, for instance, import of foreign species and modification of habitats by climate change as well as other habitat

modification. Members requested to comment on report. Hopefully there will be a future publication of report within both academic and 'practical' arenas.

Action 6.1: ID to email document to MJF to distribute

Action 6.2: Members to contribute responses by Christmas

The Endless Village revisited

PS working on this, report in Work Programme Progress chart

Street Trees and Sustainability

GD's new project: MJF to pursue for details

Action 6.3: MJF to pursue GD for description of project

An assessment of the capacity of Local Authorities to undertake integrated management of greenspace networks

JH to detail by next meeting

Review of social and community criteria for selection of local sites of importance for nature conservation

PF stated that DEFRA are considering community and social criteria. There is a possibility that these may be applied to England only. Need information on situation on Wales, Scotland and NI.

Action 6.4: PF and MJF to put together note on current situation in time for the next meeting

Urban Habitat Mapping and Evaluation

PJ to provide dates on when report to be presented to MJF

Why nature is good for you

ID to provide report by 9th Jan to MJF before February meeting.

Developing the Award

Work ongoing (section 3 above)

UK MAB committee

Next UK MAB meeting 19 February 2003

Urban Biosphere Reserves

PF to continue to contribute to the MAB Urban Group on Urban Biosphere Reserves. David Knight will continue as the nominated UK representative on this group

Website

Work ongoing to integrate automated, periodic search facilities to the Urban Forum website. This should gather information on Urban Forum interests from all over the internet and encourage the use of the website as a resource on Urban Biodiversity and other issues. Let MAB Urban Group know about website when completed.

Action 6.5: MJF to complete website work and report to MAB forum

Action 6.6: MJF to quantify website hit-rate / ranking for next meeting

Urban Forum Finances

CCW to increase contribution to £2253 before VAT. EN contributing £4553 before VAT. CCW and EN thanked for this contribution. Some money available for workshops, etc. Further information below (section 7).

Additional:

ID noted report from urban ecosystems meeting in Paris. Provides a good summary of importance of Urban Greenspace.

Action 6.7: ID to circulate report on UNESCO meeting.

SNH work on Urban Habitat Evaluation. Passed to IA.

Action 6.8: MJF to find out progress on any SNH work

Action 6.9: PF to circulate draft specification for low level urban habitat evaluation criteria for general assessment

7. Finances

Just under £2000 available for secretariat and website. £3000 available for special projects. Suggested uses: potential 1 day workshops in Scotland and/or Northern Ireland, support of Award for Excellence, new yellow book.

PC suggested formalised Urban Forum opinion on guidance for social and community aspects in the nature conservation evaluation of urban greenspaces and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation. Possibly in yellow book format. Could be welcome in Wales, Northern Ireland if DEFRA guidelines are not applied. Suggestions that current lack of guidelines means that human aspects are ignored.

PF to create outline of document with members to write sections on Health, Education, Biodiversity, Land taxation, etc.

Action 7.1: PF to circulate outline before February meeting via MJF

8. Meetings in 2004

Action 8.1: MJF to ask IA what should happen for May meeting in Scotland

Potential for NI meeting in December 2004 to include a 1-day workshop. Possibilities for linking timing and location of some meetings with Inter Agency Group meetings to simplify arrangements and allow increased attendance.

9. Website

Details within Work Programme project above (section 6).

10. Matters arising from previous minutes

None

11. Any Other Business

- i. Haskins report may have impacts on work related to urban forum

Action 11.1: PC to circulate note from Inter-Agency Urban Habitat Network on impacts of Haskins report

- ii. George Barker's rumoured move to Dorset was just a rumour and he is alive and well and looking for stories of Old Boys for his book on his school

12. Dates of Next Meetings

25 February 2004 - London (CABE)

25 May 2004 - Scotland (location tbc)

15 September 2004 - Birmingham (location tbc)

7 December 2004 - NI (location tbc)

Summary of actions

Action 3.1: MJF to ask JB, PJ and IA to consider this for Severn, Kingfisher and Jupiter respectively and to gather information by 15th January

Action 3.2: PC, PF and GL to produce summary of 'story' and attributes of potential candidates in NI, Cwm Talwg (Wales) and Northwood SRB, Kirkby by 15th January

Action 3.3: CG to write 1 side summary of award, including new approach, for 15th January

Action 3.4: MJF to collate all information for 25th January for presentation at next meeting on 25th February

Action 4.1: PF to write 1 side summary on 'What is an Urban Biosphere Reserve' and email to MJF by 25 January in order to circulate before next meeting

Action 4.2: MJF to revise the poster to remove references to New York so that members can advertise the work of the Urban Forum

Action 5.1: MJF and PF to coordinate invitation to Julia Thrift

Action 5.2: MJF to notify PS of this

Action 5.3: MJF to circulate papers by 25th January

Action 6.1: ID to email document to MJF to distribute

Action 6.2: Members to contribute responses by Christmas

Action 6.3: MJF to pursue GD for description of project

Action 6.4: PF and MJF to put together note on current situation in time for the next meeting

Action 6.5: MJF to complete website work and report to MAB forum

Action 6.6: MJF to quantify website hit-rate / ranking for next meeting

Action 6.7: ID to circulate report on UNESCO meeting.

Action 6.8: MJF to find out progress on any SNH work

Action 6.9: PF to circulate draft specification for low level urban habitat evaluation criteria for general assessment

Action 7.1: PF to circulate outline before February meeting via MJF

Action 8.1: MJF to ask IA what should happen for May meeting in Scotland

Action 11.1: PC to circulate note from Inter-Agency Urban Habitat Network on impacts of Haskins report

Outstanding Actions

Review of Outstanding Actions from September 2003 meeting:	
Incomplete:	
7.1 ID to send note on Millennium Assessment to MJF	Action point remains open.