



**Minutes of the UK MAB Urban Forum meeting held 15 September 2004 at the Scottish Natural Heritage Headquarters, Hope Terrace, Edinburgh**

**Present**

Moira Anderson	(MA)	DEFRA Biodiversity Unit
Ian Angus	(IA)	SNH
John Box	(JB)	Atkins Environment (Chair)
Peter Cush	(PC)	Environment & Heritage Service
Gerald Dawe	(GD)	Independent Consultant
Ian Douglas	(ID)	Manchester University
Pete Frost	(PF)	CCW
David Knight	(DK)	English Nature
Grant Luscombe	(GL)	Landlife
Emily Postan	(EP)	Scottish Executive
Julie Proctor	(JP)	Greenspace Scotland
Matt Fry	(MJF)	CEH Wallingford (Secretary)

**1. Apologies and Welcome**

Apologies

Penny Angood	(PG)	Graham Leeks	(GJLL)
Mathew Frith	(MF)	Peter Morgan	(PM)
Chris Gordon	(CG)	David Nicholson-Lord	(DNL)
John Handley	(JH)	Alan Scott	(AS)
Carolyn Harrison	(CH)	Peter Shirley	(PS)

JB welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Ian Angus and SNH for hosting it.

**2. Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the May 2004 meeting were signed by JB as an accurate record

**3. Presentation on Environmental Justice**

Emily Postan, Environmental Justice Co-ordinator with the Scottish Executive, gave a fascinating presentation on the definitions of Environmental Justice and the direction in which the Scottish Executive are going with regards to this area. She described how, in this context, justice essentially equates to 'fairness' and that environmental justice was therefore fairness with respect to quality of life, 'addressing the equitable distribution of environmental quality'. The approach in Scotland is aiming to be both procedural and practical, e.g. providing rights to access to information and mechanisms to participate fully in decisions affecting environments in which people live as well as cleaning areas of low quality environment. She stated that there was an attempt to move away from the interpretation of environmental impact as solely the impact of people on

the environment to one including the impact of the environment on people. There was mention of criticism that there was excessive concentration on minor street-level pollution compared to major polluters. Research has been commissioned from Strathclyde university to find people's chief environmental concerns, with results available April. Mention was made of the capacity of the Environment Information Regulations, together with the Public Information Act, to encourage public involvement. Research within the University of Staffordshire is attempting to link the mapping of environmental indicators, e.g. air quality, river water quality, etc., to indices of multiple deprivation ([Link to website](#)). The issue of capacity building in communities was discussed, to ensure that it is not only scientifically qualified people who are able to benefit from existing and future environmental regulations. Friends of the Earth Scotland have made Environmental Justice a central issue when campaigning in communities. The meeting discussed many of the points raised within Emily's presentation, centring in particular on the need for a holistic approach to environmental regeneration, the importance of change in inspiring communities, and the need for continual / ongoing change.

Emily Postan was thanked for her excellent presentation.

**Action 3.1. ID and GL to write short note as input to Scottish Executive from Urban Forum, PC and GD to view, MJF to send to EP.**

#### **4. Presentation on Greenspace and developing the Greenspace Scotland network**

Julie Procter, Chief Officer of Greenspace Scotland, gave a presentation on the work of Greenspace Scotland network. Greenspace Scotland (GSS) ([www.greenspacescotland.org.uk](http://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk)) was established in 2002 by Scottish Natural Heritage and aims to shift the focus from what is traditionally considered Scottish natural environment to urban issues. 80% of Scotland's population live in cities and towns. GSS is an umbrella trust for 7 local greenspace partnerships and trusts across Scotland, covering 2/3 of the country. Their mission involves 'Working together to improve the quality of life of people in urban communities through the creation and sustainable management of greenspaces'. Currently in some areas of Scottish cities greenspace is a blight and not an asset. They aim to use greenspace as a means for improving the quality of life for people. Their approach is not just about community 'ownership' of greenspace but making sure that greenspaces are appropriate to communities needs. They have been working with health authorities and are hoping to involve enterprises to assist with the development of good quality greenspace. Julie distributed copies of Greenspace leaflets, also available from their website, and mentioned a conference, Greenspace, the common denominator, organized with health authorities and community and development agencies. Discussion followed on topics such as the need to achieve the 'sustainable management' aspect of the Greenspace mission, and on the importance of maintenance of greenspaces, including NRs, paths, woodlands, etc., as other public facilities.

Julie was thanked for her interesting presentation.

**Action 4.1. MJF to contact JP with regard to circulation of GSS newsletter**

#### **5. Election of new Chair for the Urban Forum**

Gerald Dawe was the single candidate for the post of chair of the UK MAB Urban Forum. GD read to the meeting his statement on how he would like to take the work of the forum forward in future. He thanked JB for his work over the last 5 years and acknowledged the valuable initiatives started and achievements over this period, particularly the level of creditable publications coming from the forum. Members were asked to vote 'For' or 'Against' the candidate or to abstain. Members who could not attend the meeting were asked to vote beforehand by email via the secretary. Votes were counted showing a result of 11 votes for with 1 abstention. JB congratulated GD on obtaining the support of the forum and wished him the best for his time as chair.

## **6. Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence**

MJF summarised the recent developments within the Award for Excellence. Recent award winners have been approached to see if they would like 'official' presentation ceremonies. Bog Meadows, Belfast had a presentation following the Urban Forum meeting in May. Dingle /Nant-y-Pandy in Anglesey, N. Wales would like a presentation soon. PF has asked Urban Forum members closest to the site to attend with the presentation. Cwm Talwg in Barry, S. Wales are also keen to have an award presentation ceremony and this will be arranged soon with PF.

ID spoke about the two sites assisted by Landlife. The topsoil stripping project is significant because of its sustainability. The site is ecologically resilient with respect to the impacts of people but gains little recognition for the efforts of the local authorities. The site was recommended for the award 'for creating a sustainable biodiverse wildflower landscape that is enjoyed by local people, helps to preserve significant species and acts as a national model of good practice in urban creative conservation in 2004' and this recommendation was accepted by the forum.

'The Old Rough', Kirkby was described as particularly special due to the process of reworking within it and ID mentioned the spontaneous enthusiasm displayed by local people on his visit to the site. The site was recommended for the award 'for providing a high quality landscape of wildflowers that bring nature to the people of Northwood and which demonstrate how creative conservation improves the quality of our lives in 2004' and this recommendation was accepted by the forum.

ID was thanked by the forum for his efforts in reviewing these sites. GL suggested that a presentation in the summer when the flowers were blooming would be appropriate.

**Action 6.1. MJF to liaise with GL with regard to presentation of certificates to sites assisted by Landlife.**

**Action 6.2. MJF to add new sites to the Urban Forum Awards for Excellence website.**

JB asked DK if the CABE Space document on biodiversity should be assessed as a potential award candidate. DK stated that this was a possibility, but would have to wait until work on the document had progressed further. The document is due to be published this financial year.

JB mentioned assessing the EN magazine Urbio for an award. DK said he would be keen for the forum to view it.

**Action 6.3. GD to obtain recent copies of Urbio from DK and assess for award as soon as possible and notify forum of recommendation by email.**

## 7. Progress on the Work Programme

The current progress on all work programme projects was reviewed.

Items of note were:

**Action 7.1. ID to circulate paper on biodiversity / climate change with a list of potential journals**

**Action 7.2. PS to contact DK with regards to funding for Endless Village project.**

**Action 7.3. GD to contact PJ about progress on his topic.**

The CABS Space manifesto has now been published. The question of whether the forum should sign up was raised. The manifesto is available on the CABS Space website:

<http://www.itsyourspace.org.uk/index.asp> and can be downloaded from:

<http://www.itsyourspace.org.uk/downloads/CABESpacemanifesto.pdf>

If forum members require, it can also be emailed although the size of the file is 800KB.

ID and JH would like to comment on PS's project on . A visiting scientist from Japan could potentially talk about similar work at February's meeting in Manchester.

**Action 7.4. ID to follow up potential for guest speaker at February meeting.**

PF went to the recent UK MAB committee meeting at which the work of the Urban Forum was very well received. PF had been invited to attend the committee meetings regularly on behalf of Wales and CCW. MA summarised the recent changes within the committee, including a new chair and a change from yearly to twice-yearly meetings. The committee had published a pamphlet highlighting the benefits of biosphere reserve status for local communities using case studies from the UK and around the world. Copies could be obtained by emailing [biodiversity@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:biodiversity@defra.gsi.gov.uk). The committee was considering two new proposals for biosphere reserve status, one of which was intended to be an urban biosphere reserve..

## 8. National People and Wildlife Centre

DK spoke briefly about the project.

**Action 8.1. MJF to send note about the centre to forum members.**

## 9. Matters arising from minutes

None

## 10. Any Other Business

DK brought up the CABS Space publication, with Countryside Agency, Lantra, EN, English Heritage and Sport England, called Parks need People which highlights the skills shortage in parks and greenspaces, particularly that the limited employment profile suggested a lack of investment in training. ([www.cabespace.org.uk/publications/index.html](http://www.cabespace.org.uk/publications/index.html))

## 11. Dates of Next Meetings

7 December 2004 - Birmingham (at Groundwork's Bennetts Hill office)  
23 February 2005 - Manchester  
24 May 2005 - Wales

## Outstanding Actions

<b>Review of Outstanding Actions from February 2003 meeting:</b>
--

Incomplete:	
Action 3.1. MJF to send letter and certificate to Landlife	Ongoing
Action 3.2. MJF to send certificate to Welsh sites and find requirements for presentation of plaque, etc.	Discussions started and ongoing
Action 3.3. MJF to send letter to Bog Meadows site.	Ongoing
Action 3.5. MJF to notify Peter Dogse of Bog Meadows presentation and find potential for future UNESCO involvement	To be completed
Action 3.7. PF to get back to DK concerning nomination of Phil Castieaux.	Ongoing
Action 3.8. PC to collate information for nomination of George Barker	Ongoing
Action 4.1. PF to discuss MoA with DK for full discussion at February meeting	Ongoing