



The UK Man and the Biosphere Committee Urban Forum

Minutes of the UK MAB Urban Forum meeting held 7 December 2004 at Groundwork's Bennetts Hill offices, Birmingham

Present

Gerald Dawe	(GD)	Independent consultant
Pete Frost	(PF)	CCW
Chris Gordon	(CG)	East Midlands Region, Countryside Agency
Peter Morgan	(PM)	Groundwork
David Nicholson-Lord	(DNL)	Independent consultant
Peter Shirley	(PS)	The West Midlands Wildlife Trusts
Matt Fry	(MJF)	CEH Wallingford (Secretary)

1. Apologies and Welcome

Apologies

Moira Anderson	(MA)	Grant Luscombe	(GL)
Ian Angus	(IA)	Carolyn Harrison	(CH)
Ian Douglas	(ID)	Graham Leeks	(GJLL)
Mathew Frith	(MF)	Alan Scott	(AS)
David Knight	(DK)		

GD welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Peter Morgan and Groundwork for hosting it.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the September 2004 meeting were signed by GD as an accurate record.

3. National People and Wildlife Centre

Peter Shirley gave a presentation on the proposed National People and Wildlife Centre in Birmingham. This is a project of the Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and Black Country, aiming to create a primary reference point for wildlife in natural and urban areas, to provide a home and capitol asset for the B+BCWT and to help provide environmental credentials to urban regeneration projects, etc. They consider Birmingham to be an ideal location. The centre is not aiming to be a visitor centre open to the public at all times, but a site, networking facility, and even think tank. It may contain offices for the B+BCWT and others as well as conference facilities, and may take on a different name in the course of its development. It aims to take an extensive 'Rebuilding Biodiversity' approach in contrast to the orthodox intensive approach. The project is in partnership with the University of Birmingham, amongst others, who have donated some land between the University botanical gardens, local school playing fields and the Edgbaston pool SSSI. Various contractors are currently involved assessing the options for a sustainably developed site and planning is currently

underway. The project will not be complete until at least three years from now, although they hope to make significant progress within the next 18 months.

The Urban Forum endorsed the idea of a National People and Wildlife Centre.

4. Urbio – assessment for use of MAB logo

GD read through his review of a number of recent issues of English Nature's Urbio magazine, proposed for an Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence. It was commended for its informed articles challenging cultural contexts, bridging the inter-disciplinary gaps inherent in the urban environment, and also for integrating the often difficult and disparate areas of the urban environment. There was also specific praise for the quality of its editing. Urbio was awarded the Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence, allowing it to use the MAB logo on future editions. A discussion of the magazine suggested a caveat that the forum would like to see more research and policy within its pages, perhaps with a 1 or 2 page summary of recent diverse research projects from around the world.

Action 4.1 MJF to write a letter to EN and arrange for the use of the logo

Action 4.2 GD to write a citation

5. Groundwork's role in the Urban Forum

Groundwork has been involved in regeneration for 25 years, with a strong nature conservation component, but increasingly in the area of regeneration and business. They currently have 2000 staff within 50 trusts across the country. PM explained that the organisation is in the process of setting up a Groundwork Federation Biodiversity Forum and he hoped to clarify Groundwork's role within the Urban Forum. PS stated that representing Groundwork within the forum had been a useful contribution in the past. The potential for increased involvement was discussed, including ideas such as the Forum assisting Groundwork with internal guidance, use of the MAB logo and enabling Groundwork's ideas to have impact within other organisations.

6. Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence

CG summed up recent changes to the award. PF spoke of the recent event and award ceremony at the Nant-Y-Pandy / Dingle LNR. An award ceremony for Cwm Talwg is planned for May following the Urban Forum meeting.

7. Progress on the Work Programme

Progress on items within the work programme was discussed.

Action 7.1 MJF to follow up ID and JH to present Climate Change impacts work at the February meeting.

PF has to reluctantly drop the work on 'Change in biodiversity in relation to climate change'. PS spoke of his progress with updating of the Endless Village, and showed some updated photographs of sites mentioned within the original study. The project continues with the potential of funding from EN.

PF spoke of the Urban Habitat Classification Scheme. Initial slow progress, due to lack of funding from the national agencies, should gather pace as EN may now provide funding.

PF also spoke of current deliberations following a UNESCO ICC meeting on Urban Biosphere Reserves in early November.

GD is hoping to present a paper on Street Trees and Sustainability at the next meeting.

PJ sent an email to the meeting concerning his Urban Habitat Mapping project. A chapter on urban habitat mapping in his forthcoming book will also be written as a paper targeted at the Urban Forum. This is currently in its penultimate draft.

Action 7.2 MJF to ask PJ for a copy of this report for the next meeting

8. Matters arising from minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting

9. Any Other Business

PS acknowledged JB's contribution to the Urban Forum during his time as Chair. The Forum agreed that a £25 book token would be an appropriate gesture of thanks.

PS highlighted a conference in Manchester on 24 February 2005 on Greener Cities

PS mentioned a book published by Elsevier Press entitled 'Urban Design – Green Dimensions' by Moughtin, to which he has contributed:

http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/bookdescription.cws_home/703850/description#description

PM highlighted www.cabernet.org.uk, 'a European multidisciplinary expert network that is working to facilitate sustainable solutions for urban brownfields' and its final conference in Belfast, 13-15 April 2005.

GD is hoping that Mark Johnston will be able to talk about his work on street trees at the February meeting.

IA forwarded some information regarding a conference on 'Nature and Health: geographies, relations and bodies' in London, 31st August – 2nd September 2005

10. Dates of Next Meetings

- 23 February 2005 - Manchester – location tbc
- 24 May 2005 - Wales (Cardiff) to be followed by presentation to Cwm Talwg
- 14 September 2005 - location tbc
- 6 December 2005 - location tbc

Outstanding Actions

Review of Outstanding Actions from September 2004 meeting:	
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 3.7. 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