



The UK Man and the Biosphere Committee Urban Forum

Minutes of the UK MAB Urban Forum meeting held 24 May 2005 at the Mount Sorrel Hotel, Barry, Cardiff.

Present

Gerald Dawe	(GD)	Independent consultant
Jane Fisher	(JF)	CEH Wallingford
Peter Frost	(PF)	Countryside Council for Wales
Alan Scott	(AS)	Independent consultant

1. Apologies and Welcome

Apologies

Ian Angus	(IA)	Carolyn Harrison	(CH)
Ian Douglas	(ID)	Graham Leeks	(GJLL)
Peter Jarvis	(PJ)	Alan Scott	(AS)
Peter Cush	(PC)	Mathew Frith	(MF)
David Nicholson-Lord	(DN)	David Knight	(DK)

GD welcomed everyone to the meeting

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the February 2005 meeting were signed by GD as an accurate record.

3. Matters arising from minutes

None that could be discussed due to the low attendance.

4. Potential UK-MAB Contribution Towards *Assessment of the Capacity of Local Authorities to Undertake Integrated Management of Greenspace Networks* (Alan Barber / John Handley)

Discussion as to whether we can provide financial support to the above publication? We should consult with the funding providers CCW and EN for their view. PF noted that if funding of this report improves urban green spaces then it may be beneficial. GD questioned if this would open the flood gates to other relevant publications? As too few members were present to make a decision PF suggested that we draw up criteria for funding publications. AS suggested that if a publication is capable of receiving a MAB award then this could be criteria for financial support. It was discussed whether it would be possible to only provide funding if the publication was likely to lead to actual change. AS said it was difficult to judge this and noted that many reports and publications are produced which are not read by local authority staff due to lack of time. General discussion about whether we need to focus our funding on meetings and

seminars which are more likely to facilitate change. Conclusion by GD was that we should not 'prime the pump' but use the MAB logo if we believe the report to be of good enough quality, which has already been done in this instance, and ask CCW and EN for clarification.

Action 4.1: JF to send Letter to CCW and EN for their view on providing funding of publications which the organisation find valuable.

5. The Natural History of Cardiff –presentation by Mary Gillham (author of *A Natural History of Cardiff: Exploring Along the River Taff* pp. 545, published 2002. ISBN 0-9537707-2-9)

Interesting talk by Mary Gillham on the natural history of Cardiff. Mary began by showing the group the green spaces along the river corridors of the Cardiff. Ecological value is heightened by the presence of both acidic and limestone geology in the region. This area is also the southern limit of rare species such as the pied-flycatcher. Some species of conservation value, such as the bee and pyramidal orchids, can be seen on newly landscaped features such as the large roundabout, junction 4 of the M40!

Interesting species can also be found on old industrial sites, including mining waste and near the old Cardiff docks. Mary describes how these seemingly unlikely areas often had a more interesting flora than the nearby uplands because of sheep grazing in those areas. The combination of exotic species introduced via the docks and which then spread along the canals and railways of Cardiff, and the low use of these old industrial sites, had allowed a great diversity of botanical species to thrive. Many of areas where the floras is most diverse, near the old docks, have since been lost to housing and associated developments. Mary described a local project, the Forest Farm NR, which encompasses a disused canal area with an interesting Charophyte flora and man-made scrapes for shallow water areas. A hide had been constructed along with sand martin habitat created by erecting sand cliffs with drain pipes for nesting areas. On the rivers salmon passes have been built into the weirs and salmon migrations are monitored. Upstream the Taff Gorge has been widened by the quarrying for dolomite. Within Cardiff the parks are particularly rich in large old trees which were planted 130 years ago.

The bay area has been significantly altered by the construction of the barrage which has reduced the transitional salt-water environments and mud flats and resulted in change to freshwater in the area which is now inland of the barrage. There has been a massive increase in *Spartina* colonisation in Cardiff bay as a result of increased silt deposition and eutrophication. Loss of salt water marsh areas, drainage of lowland agricultural land and coastal erosion of the remaining mud flats has resulted in a reduction in snipe and redshank populations. There have been some lowland areas preserved however, such as the River Rhymney oxbow which was threatened with landfill and is now conserved as a lake.

Action 5.1: JF to add a link to the book of the UF web site.

6. Progress on the Work Programme / Annual Report 04/05 (Gerald Dawe)

PJ and C. Young: paper title, need to discuss among members for comment.

PF work progress updates: 1. Climate Change and biodiversity. PC does not have time and can not work on the report within his official CCW role. Can anyone else do it? (*agenda item for next meeting*). 2. Classification of urban habitats –progression stalled due to funding. But David Knight (DK) has done excellent work on an urban habitat classification system – could refer to this. 3. Review criteria for local site awards - DK has reviewed criteria for England and refined the social criteria. PF has drafted an outline and wanted UF volunteers to collaborate by writing parts – to go into a MAB yellow book. 4. Urban biosphere – Gothenburg meeting, 1st June. Criteria will be discussed and firmed up.

GD work progress: Street trees and sustainability – draft paper.

Action 6.1: JF circulate the three draft papers/reports for comment before next meeting.

Action 6.2: JF to update annual report

Action 6.3: JF to send the updated work programme round all to check and for members to update their section as necessary.

7. Any Other Business

Carolyn Harrison has resigned from the group due to lack of time. Discussion about the need to find a replacement and whether we should look to get more women in the forum. Possible new recruits were suggested and AS noted that we have few representatives from local authorities.

Action 7.1: JF to circulate criteria for new members before next meeting, ask members to suggest suitable people,

Low attendance by UF members was discussed.

Action 7.2: JF to look up those who have not attended for the last 3 meetings and send an email/letter ask if they are still interested and able to attend the group.

Action 7.3: JF to write funding request letter to CCW and EN

8. Dates of Next Meetings

Next meeting – London. Was scheduled for Wednesday 14th September but this clashes with the UK MAB meeting. Possible rescheduled for the week before. A new date will be issued as soon as possible.

Action 8.1: JF to arrange a new date for the September meeting.

December meeting – Birmingham

9. Walk to Cwmtalwg Nature Reserve for MAB presentation

Presentation of the award to Cwmtalwg NR.

Action 9.1: JF to check this site is on UF web site with the up-to-date citation.