



## The UK Man and the Biosphere Committee Urban Forum

### Minutes of the UK MAB Urban Forum meeting held 7th September 2005 at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham.

#### Present

Gerald Dawe	(GD)	Independent consultant
Jane Fisher	(JF)	CEH Wallingford
Peter Frost	(PF)	Countryside Council for Wales
Ian Douglas	(ID)	University of Manchester
Peter Jarvis	(PJ)	University of Wolverhampton
Peter Shirley	(PS)	West Midlands Wildlife Trusts
Peter Morgan	(PM)	Groundwork UK
David Goode	(DG)	University College London (formerly Greater London Authority)
Grant Luscombe	(GL)	Landlife
Penny Angold	(PA)	University of Birmingham

#### 1. Apologies and Welcome

##### Apologies

Alan Scott	(AS)	Graham Leeks	(GJLL)
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 May 2005 meeting were signed by GD as an accurate record.

#### 3. Matters arising from minutes

None

#### 4. Publication of abstracts in the MAB website – extra item

GD suggested that abstracts from books, reports and monographs presented to the forum could be added to the website. This would result in a collection of none academic abstracts which would not appear on conventional journal abstract systems. This could prove a valuable resource as well as increasing the number of UF website hits.

**Action 4.1: JF to create space on the website for abstracts and put abstract of Mary Gillham's book on the UF website.**

## **5. Discussion on: The Mapping of Urban Habitats and its Evaluation paper.**

Peter Jarvis gave a brief description of his paper. The paper discusses the mapping of the value of urban environments to meet various goals, what is meant by value and to who. The paper describes a scaling system to take account of habitat quality, area, pollution, presence of rare/endangered species etc. The value of the space for users in terms of access and safety can also be scored. As a result some urban habitats will score highly for habitat value and less high for users, or visa versa. Also discussed are the conflicts between users and the mapping of economic value so that the habitats can compete with the economic pressures of transport and housing needs. There is a need to translate maps into a form for non-experts. Also considered is the mapping of tree-cover, biotope mapping, connectivity, and added value using a Habitat Value Index. This latter technique may allow the impact of different management options on the value of urban habitats to be predicted or modelled.

PJ was interested to know if the forum considered the style and content to be appropriate and asked for suggestions of good and bad practice, especially from the UK.

ID commented that the discussion of different styles of mapping was good and suggested that bio-geochemical and substrate information could be included. We need to discuss what type of mapping is the most useful to end-users.

GL noted that temporal scale is important and need for updating the maps. He also emphasised that, despite the presence of sophisticated mapping techniques for urban areas, all too often destructive development would proceed despite what the maps said. What then, was their role? DG commented that the report had taken a rather academic viewpoint and would like to see a more applied focus, for instance the mapping of sites to identify areas for nature conservation. He stressed the importance of defining the purpose of the mapping in order to determine the method. DG and PF suggested case studies in Portland, Oregon and Durban, S. Africa.

PM described how the use of field ecologists to carry out Phase I habitat mapping led to a map which was difficult for non-specialists to interpret. At Groundwork they had used a more basic mapping approach based on the expert opinion of field ecologists to identify sites that could be developed and managed through to sites that would require expert study before any change took place. There is a pragmatic need to choose between ecology, heritage, soils, chemistry and social mapping drivers and an awareness of time and budget.

PS also stressed the need for simplicity in order to make the maps understandable for policy makers and asked if many of the issues discussed in the paper would apply to habitat mapping in general. The key matter for maps was, what was their significance, and who were they for?

PA noted that Solihull council currently used simple maps of the distance between residential areas and natural open spaces. Their definition of 'natural' is unknown and it was generally discussed how these maps could be used as a focus to increase green areas by identify those areas without.

DG agreed to supply to PJ, methodology relating to mapping open space deficiency within GLA area.

PJ thanked the forum for their comments.

### **Action 5.1: JF to put this draft paper on the UF web site**

## **6. Discussion on the Royal Commission Urban Study**

DG has been asked to report on urban wildlife and urban environmental management to the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution Urban study. DG has suggested that if anyone has suggestions of major issues to be brought up at the meeting they are to email him.

There is to be a meeting on the scope of Natural England including discussions about the inclusion of the urban environment. GD suggested that the Urban Forum should send a statement as it is important that the urban environment is taken into consideration. GD and PF are to prepare a statement on behalf of the forum.

**Action: GD/PF: Draft statement and circulate before November 2005.**

## **7. UF recruitment.**

Carolyn Harrison has resigned from the forum and the Urban Forum would like to extend its thanks to Carolyn for her contribution to the forum over the years.

A replacement and recruitment to the forum was discussed. GD considered that, in light of the criteria for appointments, read to the group by JF, and which emphasises Equal Opportunities, women are currently under-represented. Following discussion, three names were put forward: (1) Alison Millwood, a community involvement and urban ecology specialist; (2) Scottish representation was suggested with the possibility of recruiting from Green Space for Scotland (minutes of earlier meeting in Edinburgh to be consulted); (3) Judy Ling Wong, of the Black Environment Network. It was agreed that all three should be approached.

**Action 7.1: JF to obtain a book token on behalf of the forum; GD to write thanking Carolyn for her work.**

**Action 7.2: JF to contact those suggested to be recruited onto the forum.**

## **8. Progress on the Work Programme**

PF (Climate change and Biodiversity) is unable to work on Climate Change and Biodiversity work programme. Those in attendance were asked if anyone else could take on this job. GL suggested that he would be able to organise seminar in the form of a field trip to one of the Landlife sites with a focus on the role of such environments in dealing with climate change. Future publications arising from these studies could have the UF stamp. It was agreed that this could form a useful substitute to PF's work.

ID: (Response of Urban Pest Species to Climate Change) work still in progress and may bring a draft paper to the next meeting. Members were invited to continue to send potential contributions to ID.

PS: (*The Endless Village* / Bunny Teagle) has secured £14,000 towards the £20,000 needed for publication and the next instalment of funding will be discussed next week. Good progress is being made.

GD: (Street Trees and Sustainability) has completed a draft paper which will be posted on the web site for comment from the Urban Forum.

PF: (Urban Habitat Classification) DK and PF have not made progress recently.

JF (Urban Forum website) web-site updating is continuing.

PF: (Review of Social and Community criteria) has completed an outline of the yellow book but it may need revising. The outline will be circulated to the forum to discuss if revision is required, and if so, what work is required to make it relevant again.

PS: (Ecological Footprints) Report will come out soon.

ID: (Why Nature is Good for you) Paper is completed and ID would like comments so that it can be taken further.

**Action 8.1: GD to send draft paper to JF to for circulation/placing on the web site for members to read and comment.**

**Action 8.2: ID to send paper to JF for circulation/placing on website for members to read and comment.**

**Action 8.3: JF to update the Work Programme progress – ask programme leaders for summaries of progress.**

## **9. Any Other Business**

1. The Annual Report of the forum and funding requests have been sent to EN and CCW. Funding may also be sort from the Environment and Heritage Service and Scottish Natural Heritage.
2. GD thanked GL and ID for the Landlife award ceremony and PF for organising the presentation at Barry, Cardiff.
3. The URGENT programme is assessing current research needs. Graham Leeks will be at the next URGENT meeting and it will be useful if the outcome from the meeting can be reported to the forum at the next meeting.
4. The tragic events at New Orleans as a result of hurricane Katrina were discussed in light of planning and management in UK cities. Parts of the SE of England lie below sea level and climate change will have storm and flooding consequences for many environments, both in the UK and for other major cities and urban areas such as those along the Yanksee River and Yellow River.

**Action 7.1: JF to contact Scottish Natural Heritage and the Environment and Heritage Service to investigate the possibility of funding**

## **10. Dates of Next Meetings**

Next meeting will be on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December, UCL, London.