



Minutes of the UK MAB Urban Forum meeting held 18th May 2006 at SNH, Hope Terrace, Edinburgh.

Present

Gerald Dawe	(GD)	Independent consultant, and Chair, Urban Forum
Jane Fisher	(JF)	CEH Wallingford, and Secretary, Urban Forum
Ian Douglas	(ID)	University of Manchester
Eilidh Johnson	(EJ)	Greenspace Scotland
Ian Angus	(IA)	Scottish Natural Heritage
Alan Scott	(AS)	Independent consultant
Russell Jones	(RJ)	Speaker

1. Apologies and Welcome

Apologies have been received from Pete Frost, John Box, Alison Millward, Peter Morgan, Peter Jarvis, David Nicholson-Lord and Peter Cush.

GD welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially Dr Russell Jones the speaker.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the March 2006 meeting were signed by GD as an accurate record.

3. Matters arising from minutes

Outstanding actions had been completed.

4. Presentation: Dr Russell Jones of the Glasgow Centre for Population Health and Glasgow and Clyde Valley Greenspace Network.

Glasgow Centre of Population Health comprises professionals from Glasgow City Council, NHS of Greater Glasgow and the University of Glasgow. The aim of the GCPH is to develop new ways of thinking and working in order to improve the health of Glasgow. GCPH aim to place people at the head of urban planning to maximise health, social and mental wellbeing.

There is evidence linking health and wellbeing to green space including the publications of Ian Douglas –so why don't health professionals 'get it'? This is a result of their medical training which concentrates on physical illness and treatment with drugs. It is expensive to do the research linking green space with health and the medical based world relies on evidence. There is a variety of evidence: anecdotal/observational/surveys/GIS and intervention studies. We know the mechanisms of increased physical activity, reduced stress, reduced carbon dioxide, reduced air pollution, reduction in traffic related accidents etc all contribute to greater

health. We should support and conduct research and promote the social model of health rather than the medical.

FAB Greenspace- a review of evidence linking green space to health. Methods: GIS mapping of green space in relation to population, quality of the space (determined by ground survey) coupled with interviews, including photographs, taken by residents. Survey results show that most residents want increased lighting, security and maintenance and more children's play areas.

Go Well- a research study supported by universities, MRC and NHS. The study aims to look into the health and wellbeing impacts of regeneration of Glasgow's housing stock, understand the process of change and pass on best practice.

<http://www.gowellonline.com>

Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership –made up of 8 local authorities aims to bring about improvements in greenspace as described in the local structure plan. Participants include; BTCV, Greenspace Scotland, RSPB, NHS etc.

Finally Russell showed some photographs of American residential and car dominated suburbs. Computer graphics were used on the photos to show these areas transformed to green, pedestrian friendly environments by superimposing cycle ways, pavements, green verges and trees onto the photos.

Discussion

ID noted that greenspaces need to be multipurpose eg: flood reduction, biodiversity, climate amelioration etc. Comments made by GD, IA, RJ on the barriers to making greenspaces multifunctional as many engineers, councils and planners etc are sceptical and communication between different specialities is hindered by jargon etc. AS noted that the quality of greenspace before and after development isn't often noted and there is a need for a standardised method of greenspace quality assessment (and also for independent assessment). ID then asked what could be learned about greenspace design from studies on areas of areas of regeneration? EJ and RJ stated that greenspaces conforming to a set design often don't work and need to be developed after local consultation. AS said that planners/councils are put off consultation by the time and expense needed to engage people and it was all agreed that the consultation process within the Glasgow Centre of Population Health was excellent. General discussion that consultations with local communities about regeneration of areas can lead to loss of important brown-field sites and a corresponding loss of invertebrate and rare plants, being replaced by trees instead. AS stated that tree planting is often asked for but is not always appropriate –need to educate people on the values of other types of open spaces. Recommended reading: "Building for Biodiversity" **[Not sure: it will do for the moment. It can be corrected next meeting]** on the Town and Country Planning association website.

5. Health and the Urban Environment Workshop.

GD went through the new structure for the workshop. RJ was invited to speak within Theme 1 on behalf of the GCPH, and accepted the invitation.

In theme 2 EJ noted that we should look not so much at diminishing urban space but quality of greenspace. GD suggested that we have (1) a diminishing quantity and separate (2) diminishing quality talk/session. AS, IA and RJ suggested speakers from

the GLA, CABE space, as they collect information on extent of greenspace on a national level, and Catherine Ward Thompson. GD asked EJ what key issues should be included in the quality theme? – EJ suggested ‘fit for purpose’ and a debate as to what is good quality? Other potential speakers including George Morris from Scottish Executive, and his co-workers Anne Ellelway and Sally McIntyre, were suggested and EJ suggested we contact the Forestry Commission as they have a relevant new project.

Dates for the workshop: not 6th, 12-14th or 21st Sept. As September is conference session it was decided to avoid September and select a day in October. Venue suggestions: Edinburgh University, Royal Botanical Gardens or the National Museum- latter has good access from station.

Action 5.1: JF to pass on workshop agenda to new secretary Lucy Ball to help arrange speakers and venue. Will need to establish approximate numbers of participant first.

6. International Urban Ecology Seminar

David Goode not present so held over for broader discussion at next meeting.

However, some brief points were raised ID noted that there is an international project on design and green cities and it may be worth combining with that. Possible external funding of the seminar though the COST was introduced by JF and considered. May need to consider appointing a separate conference organiser as this is such a big event to organise. ID and assistant may be able to help organise the event but this would need to be discussed again in the future.

(Planning for this seminar to be included in next agenda)

7. Discussion on assessment of HMP Maidstone’s wildlife/biodiversity project for a UK MAB Urban Forum wildlife award.

GD and AS to visit HMP Maidstone to carry out an assessment.

8. Progress on the Work Programme

ID = updates made at the meeting.

PS = Is he is able to put MAB logo on his publication?

GD =street trees and sustainability conference deferred to 2007 (partly due to other conference/workshop commitments). Will reapply to EN and CCW for funding and look into other sources.

EJ/Greenspace = are interested in contributing a work programme. EJ will add a target in the table as some of their work compliments other targets in the table. Eg: quality issues for greenspaces in Scotland.

Action 8.1: JF to send a draft new target in the work programme to EJ/Greenspace Scotland for them to edit as required.

Action 8.2: JF to send last years work programme and table of progress round work programme leaders to be updated.

Action 8.3: ALL work programme leaders to update their progress over last year in work programme table.

Action 8.4: JF to write annual report and funding letters to be sent to CCW and EN.

Action 8.5 The Urban Forum should look to publish ID's work on mental health and greenspace as a booklet (it is already available as a PDF file).

9. Any Other Business

JF is leaving CEH and her role as Urban Forum secretary to be replaced by Lucy Ball, administrator of the sustainable economies science programme at CEH Wallingford. Lucy will be accompanied to the next Urban Forum meeting by Matt Fry.

10. Dates of Next Meetings

Tuesday 12th September 2006: Manchester University -TBC

October 2006: date to be arranged- Health and the Urban Environment workshop.

Tuesday 5th December 2006: London – venue TBA