



The UK Man and the Biosphere Committee Urban Forum

Minutes of the UK MAB Urban Forum meeting held 23rd September 2009 at Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Belfast.

1. Present

Gerald Dawe	(GD)	Independent consultant (Chair)
Ambra Burls	(AB)	Anglia Ruskin University (Deputy Chair)
Peter Cush	(PC)	Northern Ireland Environment Agency
Ian Douglas	(ID)	University of Manchester
Jane Houghton	(JH)	Natural England
Peter Frost	(PF)	Countryside Council for Wales
Nigel Lawson	(NL)	University of Manchester (Secretary)
Alison Millward	(AM)	Independent Consultant
Judy Ling Wong	(JLW)	Black Environment Network

Jane Houghton –in attendance as an observer

2. Apologies

Ian Angus, Mathew Frith, David Goode, John Handley, Philip James, Eilidh Johnston, Graham Leeks, Grant Luscombe.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes were approved.

4. Matters arising

Outstanding actions from the last meeting were reviewed:

- A1 Request for publications for the Forum web site: NL to write to members who have not yet responded. **A1**
- A2 Logging system (Forum archives): AM arranged for the old Forum files and papers to be handed over to Dr. Susan Davies at University of Aberystwyth whose student has undertaken to produce an archive. An honorarium of £300 payable to the student was agreed and approved. The Forum also formally thanked Dr. Davies for her assistance. NL to follow up **A2**
- A3 Circulation of Statins and Greenspaces has been done.
- A4 UK MAB Urban Forum Award for Excellence to *Meanwhile Wildlife Gardens*. AB to obtain a quote for a stainless steel plaque (circa 15cm² with the logo in color) and to liaise with NL **A3**
- A5 Nomination of *Roots and Shoots* for the UK MAB Urban Forum Award for Excellence. NL to chase Mathew Frith for a written report **A4**

- A6 Nomination of Buglife's legal process for UK MAB Urban Forum Award for Excellence. Buglife mounted an unsuccessful legal challenge to development on West Thurrock Marshes because Natural England provided evidence that the site could be developed without damaging biodiversity. Concern was expressed whether awarding an unsuccessful process might set an unwanted precedence and whether Buglife's application met the criteria for an award. IA to formally write to Natural England for clarification. IA and AM to consider whether Buglife's application meets the Forum's criteria for an award. **A5**
- A7 done. The guidance covering the award process has been reviewed by NL and GD and is now on the web site.
- A8 done. GD responded to ADAS
- A9 Links between the Urban Forum and UK MAB Parent Committee: GD to invite Andy Bell to the next meeting of the Forum **A6**
- A 10 being attended to below under Social Trends
- A 11 to A16a being attended to below under conferences
- A16b Shanghai Expo being attended to below under conferences
- A17 to be attended to below under Handbook of Urban Ecology
- A 18 member's affiliations has been done
- A 19 and A 20 being attended to below under nominees to the Forum
- A 21 the work-plan item formerly titled 'Urban Biosphere Reserves' needs a revised terminology as this term is no longer acceptable to UNESCO MAB. PF reported that the correct terminology to be applied is now 'Applying the Biosphere Reserve concept to urban areas'
- A22 Following the proposal to aim for Biosphere Reserve status for the lower Thames estuary, DG to contact Terry Farrell to enquire further and PF to follow this up **A7**
- A23 PC arranged site visits to Giants Park and to the Connswater Community Greenway in advance of this meeting. Members formally thanked PC for the two most interesting and informative visits.
- A24 done. Stephen Garvin (BRE) has agreed to address the Forum meeting to be held in Edinburgh on February 24th 2010 on regeneration of contaminated land and urban ecology.
- A 25 done. John Little and Nigel Dunnett have agreed to address the Forum meeting to be held in London on December 9th on green roofs.

5. Conferences:

a) Street Trees and Sustainability

The concern is trees in the urban environment and the purpose of the conference is to change how urban trees are managed. The conference should be controversial and should reflect passion rather than just academic debate. It should address issues such as health and well-being, economics, aesthetics and insurance. Some recent historic matters (1980s) such as street tree trenching might also prove relevant. The aim should be to change policy and practice. AB and GD were arranging speakers. GD proposes the following themes (discussion topics):

1. Why did people plant street trees? (E.g. Victorians)
2. Present trends in street tree planting (e.g. diminution in cultivar heights, removal of street trees, etc.)
3. Currently understood benefits of street trees

4. Street trees -their diminution and destruction (e.g. this is the key problem)
5. The future safeguarding of street trees (e.g. How do we do it?)

It has now been decided to hold the conference on a Wednesday between May 1st and May 15 or between June 1st and June 15th 2010 in either London or Birmingham and to cater for plus/minus 150 delegates. It was also decided to levy an attendance fee of £ 50.00

The mix of 'academic' and evidence-based research with community experiences regarding street trees were to be at the heart of the meeting. ID suggested that for community-based approaches, maybe four case studies e.g. of protecting street trees, or of street tree diminution, could be included in a structured way, within an hour (i.e. 15 minutes each). This was agreed. JLW said she was aware of one Islamic community which wanted palm trees planted around their mosque, and only became aware of the wider possibilities of campaigning for street trees via this route; AM said that she knew of one elected member / officer relationship which had been very influential in preserving street trees. Venue to be London. Alternatively, Birmingham, Manchester or Sheffield might be considered. The greatest number of attendees was more likely in London.

- GD and AB, bearing in mind the above, to finalise speakers **A8**:
- NL to coordinate venue and room bookings **A9**:
- NL to contact UCL and John Box of Atkins **A10**.
- JLW to contact Oasis Centre **A11**
- AM to contact Austin Court Birmingham **A12**

Members are requested to contribute their ideas and to suggest speakers to GD or AB who will coordinate the programme **A13**

- PM to invite Jim Smith (Forestry Commission) to address the conference **A14**
- AM to contact Councillor Martin Delaney in Kingsheath **A15**
- NL to contact David Brierley and/or Katya Surminski ABI re insurance aspects **A16**
- GD to contact the London Tree Officer's Association (LTOA) regarding their potential participation **A17**
- AB and GD have approached Ian Rotherham, Editor of the *Arboricultural Journal (International Journal of Urban Forestry)* regarding publication of the proceedings, and the outcome has been reasonably positive.

b) Post-URGENT meeting:

GLE has material on ecological findings from the URGENT programme that there is synergy with UNESCO's Biosphere Research programme.

It was felt that an event would be useful and PF undertook to contact GLE and to report progress at the next meeting **A18**

c) Shanghai Expo: Following the 3rd World Congress of Biosphere Reserves in Madrid, 2008, the UK agreed to help MAB drive forward the 'urban' issues arising from the Madrid Action Plan. In connection with this the MAB Secretariat have contacted the UK MAB Committee and said: "we can try to get 1/2 experts from UK for a meeting in the Shanghai Expo as part of a larger UNESCO-China Forum on "Cultural Heritage and Urban Regeneration". PF reported that the situation regarding participation is still fluid. PF to contact the MAB Secretariat

to find out what they had in mind for the UK 'experts' to do, and what outcomes they were seeking from the meeting. This will be done at the EURO MAB 2009 conference where Natarjan Ishwaran will be present. It was noted that the URBIS Network planned to have a presence at the Shanghai Expo and they also deal with the application of the Biosphere Reserve concept to urban areas - predominantly through academic research coordinated by the Stockholm Resilience Institute. **A19**.

Details of the Shanghai Expo are at
<http://en.expo2010china.com/index.htm>

6. A Handbook of Urban Ecology

The handbook is being edited by ID and DG. It will be published by Routledge. The Handbook will be a publication of UK MAB Urban Forum and will include the Forum logo. ID reported that 20 chapters are ready, 21 chapters are prepared and edited and 24 chapters are still to be completed. ID hopes that it will be sent to the publisher by the end of October for publication in August 2010. ID to approach Natasha Bevan at UNESCO UK National Commission about publicising the Handbook and for formal approval to use the UNESCO logo. **A20**.

7a. Social Trends

'Discover yourself outside: new landscapes for a civil society in a changing climate'. A sub group of the Forum comprised of AM, GL and AB (with NL in attendance) has produced a first draft a publication to highlight the benefits in a time of climatic change of developing uninteresting and abandoned patches of land in to landscapes designed to promote outside leisure and well-being. The priority is to get a public statement out to politicians before the general election, with the full evidence base and a toolkit to follow. The sub-group plans to meet in Crewe on October 20th 2009 to take this forward. **A21**.

NL and ID to investigate employing a graduate student to expand on the existing research matrix/literature review **A22**.

7b Greenspace Toolbox:

A sub-group of the Forum comprising PF, AB, GLE and NL held a workshop on May 26th and reviewed the Forum's approach to developing a greensapce toolkit in conjunction with CCW. Whilst there are a number of guides and case studies covering a variety of issues such as adaptation to climate change there are no standards for the provision of greenspace to control pollution, combat heat islands or ameliorate urban flooding. Experience from the National Playing Fields Association has shown the power of setting a standard - which is then easily adopted by local authorities. CCW and Natural England adopted a similar standard setting approach for the provision of greenspace for human health and well being and then released a toolkit to help local authorities convert the standard into action. This again proved successful, generating an evidence base which might then be used by local communities and other stakeholders to request action on green spaces in their areas. The sub-group identified topic areas where similar toolkits might be applicable and it plans to hold a further meeting in Crewe on October 20th 2009. **A23**

8. Web site

The Forum web site has been redesigned and modernised. The new web site has been running in parallel with the existing site for two months to enable members to comment. It was agreed that PC and NL would coordinate the change over [A24](#). It was also agreed that the web site would be on the agenda for all future meetings [A24](#).

9. Nominees to the Urban Forum

Jane Houghton (Natural England), policy worker with regard to the urban environment, was invited to become a member of the Forum. A CV will be submitted. GD to approach Paul Evans (Guardian Correspondent), and obtain a CV. [A25](#). NL to approach Joanne Tippett (University of Manchester), and obtain a CV [A26](#).

10. Work programme

NL to update the work programme annually to year ending December 31st and to include it in the Annual Report.

11. Financial Report

NL reported that the bank balance at 22nd September stood at £3,788.69 but that the actual balance after payment of outstanding liabilities (member's expenses re this meeting, the web site and the archives) is only £1,400.

The funding Agencies expressed a clear desire to contribute £1,500 each to the operation of the Forum in 2009/2010 financial year, subject to reaching an acceptable agreement on targets and outputs.

NL to contact NE, NIEA, CCW and SNH to establish the process for obtaining their contributions to year ending 31/3/2010 [A27](#).

PF to contact all the Agency representatives to seek to establish a multi year (-ideally three year) agreement to fund the Forum from 2010/2011 financial year onward, subject to reaching a mutually acceptable agreement on targets and outputs. [A28](#).

It was agreed that all income from conferences and publications should go to a contingency fund.

12. Any Other Business

1. NL to invite Chris Thomas and/or Gerry Metcalfe of UK Climate Impacts programme (UKCIP) to address the May 2010 meeting of the Forum [A29](#).
2. NL and ID to investigate an appropriate person to review the Forum accounts on an annual basis on behalf of the Secretariat [A30](#).
3. NL reported that Grant Luscombe had attended one of Natural England's Vision 2060 workshops in London on September 9th 2009 on behalf of the Forum. A report on the findings from all the workshops will be collated in due and will be circulated to Members.
4. JLW gave a brief presentation of her discussion paper 'Multicultural Interpretation and BAME Environmental Participation'. It was agreed that JLW be invited to present on this important topic at a future meeting.

13. Dates of future meetings.

- Wednesday 9th December 2009 London, UCL
- Wednesday 24th February 2010 Edinburgh, SNH
- Wednesday 19th May 2010 London, UCL (to be confirmed)
- Wednesday 22nd September 2010 Birmingham, Atkins (to be confirmed)