



The UK Man and the Biosphere Committee Urban Forum

Draft Minutes of the UK MAB Urban Forum meeting held 9th December 2009 at University College, London.

1. Present

Gerald Dawe	(GD)	Independent consultant (Chair)
Ambra Burls	(AB)	Anglia Ruskin University (Deputy Chair)
Peter Cush	(PC)	Northern Ireland Environment Agency
Peter Frost	(PF)	Countryside Council for Wales
David Goode	(DG)	UCL
Nigel Lawson	(NL)	University of Manchester (Secretary)
Graham Leeks	(GLE)	Centre for Hydrology and Ecology
Grant Luscombe	(GL)	Landlife
Alison Millward	(AM)	Independent Consultant
Alan Scott	(AS)	Independent Consultant

Andrew Bell ((Chair of UK MAB Forum) in attendance an observer

Nigel Dunnett (University of Sheffield) invited speaker

John Little (The Grass Roof Company) invited speaker

David Scoffield (Kensington and Chelsea MIND) in attendance to receive an award

2. Apologies

Ian Angus, Ian Douglas, Mathew Frith, John Handley, Jane Houghton, Philip James, Judy Ling Wong, Julie Proctor, Joe Ravetz.

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): Dr. Susan Davies at University of Aberystwyth will be arranging her students to produce the archive during the semester to May 2010. 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*. Done and on Agenda
- A5 Nomination of *Roots and Shoots* for the UK MAB Urban Forum Award for Excellence. In the absence of a response from Mathew Frith NL to contact Judy Ling Wong for a written report **A3**

- 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. **A4**
- A6 Links between the Urban Forum and UK MAB Parent Committee: Andrew Bell attended this meeting- see below under item 5.
- A7 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 **A5**
- A8 to A17 Street Trees Conference- see below under Conferences.
- A18 to A25 are agenda items and are dealt with below
- A26 carried forward: NL to approach Joanne Tippett (University of Manchester) regarding membership of the Forum and obtain a CV **A6**.
- A27 and A28 are agenda items and are dealt with below.
- A29 NL to invite Chris Thomas and/or Gerry Metcalfe of UK Climate Impacts programme (UKCIP) to address the May 2010 meeting of the Forum **A7**.
- A30 Forum members to investigate an appropriate person to review the Forum accounts on an annual basis on behalf of the Secretariat **A8**.

5. Presentation by Andrew Bell, Chair, National MAB Committee

AB outlined the work of the National Committee and how this committee reports back to UNESCO. He emphasised the role UK MAB Urban Forum should play in meeting UK MAB's commitment to address article 23 of the Madrid Action Plan for Biosphere Reserves (2008-2013) whose target is a mechanism for biosphere reserves to address urban issues in a regional context and whose action is to facilitate the integration of urban areas into biosphere reserves. UK MAB will be developing its research agenda and the UK MAB Urban Forum will feed into it.

It was agreed that the Forum would investigate undertaking training session for RTPI to raise awareness of green infrastructure in respect of adaptation strategies to climate change. DG agreed to do a presentation on the value of green infrastructure at the RTPI summer school **A9** and AB agreed to investigate devising an appropriate training module **A10**.

6. Conferences:

- a) Do Street Trees have a Future? (formerly Street Trees and Sustainability). Arrangements have been made to hold this symposium at UCL in London on Wednesday May 12th 2010. The concern is trees in the urban environment and the purpose of the conference is to change how urban trees are managed. The conference will be controversial and will reflect passion rather than just academic debate. The conference will consider the case for and against street trees and will address issues such as health and well-being, economics, aesthetics, wind throw effects on trees, and insurance. The aim is to change policy and practice.

- AB confirmed that 7 speakers had accepted invitations
 - AB reported that she will be receiving circulation lists from the following organisations:
.....list to be inserted.....
 - DG reported that he has agreement from UCL for the hire of the Gustav Tuck Lecture Theatre and the North Cloisters area at the reduced rate of £570. GD thanked DG on behalf of the Forum for this.
 - NL reported that at the agreed fee of £50 per delegate the break-even will be 70 paying delegates.
 - All members are urged to assist in publicising the event either directly or by sending lists of people to be contacted to NL **A11**
 - NL to investigate payment of delegate fees via Pay Pal **A12**
- b) Post-URGENT meeting (provisional):
This meeting is intended to stimulate connections between outcomes of the URGENT programme and urban-rural ecosystem services. GLE has material on ecological findings from the URGENT programme that there is synergy with UNESCO's Biosphere Research programme. This agenda item is carried forward for consideration at the next meeting of the Forum **A13**
- c) Shanghai Expo: May 1st to October 31st 2010. The MAB Secretariat has contacted the UK MAB Committee saying that they can try to get 1-2 experts from the UK for a meeting at the Expo as part of a larger UNESCO-China Forum on Cultural Heritage and Urban Regeneration. 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 agenda item is carried forward for consideration at the next meeting of the Forum **A14**

7. Presentations by Nigel Dunnett and John Little

Nigel Dunnett, Reader in Urban Horticulture, Department of Landscape, University of Sheffield and Director of Green Roof Centre, University of Sheffield presented his work on making green roofs and pictorial meadows part of the urban landscape. Pictorial meadows breathe life into problem places, people interact with them, they have wide therapeutic value and are low maintenance. Sheffield City Council have declared the green roof on a school building as a Local Nature Reserve.

John Little of the Grass Roof Company demonstrated the value to wildlife and the local community of using wild flowers as part of the maintenance of urban green spaces and gardens, at no additional cost.

Both presentations will be placed on the Forum's web site. **A15**

8. UK MAB Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence to Meanwhile Gardens- Presentation of the plaque to Meanwhile Gardens.

David Scoffield (Kensington and Chelsea MIND) was presented with the Forum's plaque by AB in recognition of Meanwhile Garden's important work with urban wildlife, vulnerable people and the wider community.

9. Greenspaces Toolbox: A methodology for assessing the extent, the quality and the appropriateness of urban greenspace on a given topic area.

This agenda item is carried forward for consideration at the next meeting of the Forum **A16**

10. A Handbook of Urban Ecology

NL reported that ID had advised him that some chapters were still outstanding and that he apologised to Forum members who had sent in their contributions on time. ID is negotiating with the publishers on the final date.

11. Social Trends- Discovering yourself outside

Agreement is needed on the text and Forum members are urged to respond to AM. GL reported that a printing 1200 copies of a 20 page document would cost £1490 including design work. GD reported that the Forum's current financial position precluded taking on such a commitment. GL undertook to approach the Landlife board re funding for this publication **A17**

12. EuroMAB

AB attended the EuroMAB meeting in Slovakia in 27-30 October 2009. Her report has been circulated to members on 30th November 2009 and the full report of meeting is on the Forum's web site under news items.

13. Web site

The new web site is now in operation.

14. Nominees to the Urban Forum

Jane Houghton (Natural England) nomination to become a member of UK MAB Urban Forum was accepted unanimously.

Paul Evans (freelance writer and broadcaster) nomination to become a member of UK MAB Urban Forum was accepted unanimously.

GD formally welcomed both Jane Houghton and Paul Evans to the Forum.

Eilidh Johnstone (Greenspace Scotland) has moved to a new role within SEPA and has tendered her resignation from the Forum. This was accepted with regret and GD expressed the Forum's best wishes to her in her new role.

15. Awards

This agenda item is carried forward for consideration at the next meeting of the Forum **A18**

16. Work programme and annual report: Secretary

This agenda item is carried forward for consideration at the next meeting of the Forum **A19**

17. Financial Report

NL reported that the net balance at 1st December 09 stood at £2721.09 but that the actual balance after payment of outstanding liabilities (member's expenses re this meeting, the archives, literature review for social trends) is only £1,400. NL also reported that the annual budget required to fund the Forums core expenditure (meetings, members and invited speakers travel to meetings, secretariat, web site, awards) amounted to approximately £5700 per annum and that funding for non-core items such as publications and conferences had to come from reserves or elsewhere. At the Forum meeting on May 26th 2009 the four funding Agencies (NE, CCW, SNH and NIEA) had expressed a clear desire to contribute £1,500 each per annum to the operation of the Forum in financial year 2009/2010, subject to reaching an acceptable

agreement on targets and outputs. NL reported that since funds were transferred from the previous secretariat in August 2008 the sole source of funding to the Forum has been supplied by CCW and that to date only CCW has contributed £1500 for 2009/10. PC confirmed that he had agreement from NIEA to transfer £1500 for 2009/10 and that this would be instigated very soon. NL reported that Peter Massini of NE has informed him that he has a commitment from NE's budget holder to provide funding of £1500 for this financial year (2009-10). No communication has been received from SNE and GD undertook to contact Ian Angus in this regard [A20](#)

PC also explained that traditionally funding for the Forum had come from NE and CCW and that due to the economic downturn it is now unlikely that NIEA would be able to continue funding the Forum to this extent in the future.

Alternative potential sources of funds were discussed and GD and NL undertook to investigate their viability [A21](#) but they emphasised the importance of funding from the four agencies to ensure continuation of the Forum's core work.

18. Any other business

No other business was raised.

19. Dates of future meetings.

- Wednesday 24th February 2010 Edinburgh, SNH
- Wednesday 11th May 2010 London, UCL
- Wednesday 22nd September 2010 Birmingham, Atkins