



The UK Man and the Biosphere Committee Urban Forum

Minutes of the UK MAB Urban Forum meeting held 24th February 2010 at University of Manchester.

1. Present

Gerald Dawe	(GD)	Independent consultant (Chair)
Ian Angus	(IA)	Scottish Natural Heritage
Ambra Burls	(AB)	Anglia Ruskin University (Deputy Chair)
Peter Cush	(PC)	Northern Ireland Environment Agency
Ian Douglas	(ID)	University of Manchester
Peter Frost	(PF)	Countryside Council for Wales
Philip James	(PJ)	University of Salford
Jane Houghton	(JH)	Natural England
Nigel Lawson	(NL)	University of Manchester (Secretary)
Grant Luscombe	(GL)	Landlife
Alison Millward	(AM)	Independent Consultant
Joe Ravetz	(JR)	University of Manchester
Joanne Tippett	(JT)	University of Manchester (by invitation)

2. Apologies

Mathew Frith, David Goode, John Handley, Graham Leeks, Judy Ling Wong, Julie Proctor, Alan Scott.

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): The preparation of the archive by Dr. Susan Davies at University of Aberystwyth and her students is now going ahead. Members of Forum will be invited to attend a presentation by the students of their work which will include instruction on maintenance of the archive. The Forum agreed to fund products required for cataloguing and preserving the archive, estimated at £150.00. Dr. Davies will be arranging for her students to produce the archive during the semester to May 2010. AM to liaise with Dr. Davies **A2**
- A3 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 again contact Judy Ling Wong for a written report **A3**

- A4 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. Agreed that NE supply their evidence and that GD visit Buglife and thereafter present the Forum with the arguments for and against this nomination in advance of the May 2010 meeting of the Forum. **A4**
- A5 Following the proposal to aim for Biosphere Reserve status for the Lower Thames Estuary, and following an exchange of e-mails between PF and David Goode immediately after this meeting, David Goode has been in contact with Terry Farrell and PF has agreed to follow this up. JH also agreed to become involved in this process **A5**
- A6 is an agenda item and is dealt with below.
- A7 has been done. Gerry Metcalfe (UKCIP) has agreed to address the meeting of the Forum scheduled for May 11th 2010.
- A8 Forum members to investigate an appropriate person to review the Forum accounts on an annual basis on behalf of the Secretariat is carried forward **A6**
- A9 The Forum to undertake a training session for RTPI to raise awareness of green infrastructure in respect of adaptation strategies to climate change is carried forward.
- A10 AM/AB to devise an appropriate training module is also carried forward and JT agreed to provide input into this process **A7**.
- A11 to A20 are agenda items and are dealt with below

5. 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.

Discussion focused on ensuring that the conference is a success and that it hopefully will provide a profit for the Forum but that the minimum requirement is that it breaks even. Thanks to the intervention of DG, UCL have now agreed the very favorable rate of £255.00 for the hire of the lecture theatre and adjoining space.

NL reported that the conference should break even with 50 paying delegates but that so far registration has been slow.

The relevant organisations i.e. AA, ISA, ICF and LTOA have been heavily canvassed by GD and AB to publicise the event from inception, however some difficulties have been experienced and further urgent discussion and correspondence will be exchanged with them to bring delegates on board.

A cut-off date for registration was discussed by the Forum and it was agreed that due to current circumstances the forum should be looking to extend the time available to get delegates on board for as long as possible. It was decided that the cut off point should be two weeks before the date of the event. It was noted that this might

inconvenience foreign delegates who might have booked travel, but that the priority was to give sufficient time for delegates to register at the last moment. All members are urged to assist in publicising the event either directly or by sending lists of people to be contacted to NL [A8](#)

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 [A9](#)

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 reported that MAB Paris is seeking clarification of the agenda from the Chinese academics. ID advised that he will be visiting China mid August 2010 and that he would, if appropriate, be available to represent the Forum at this meeting and this potential action by ID was accepted with thanks. [A10](#)

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

The Forum intends to create "Toolbox" which it intends to fill with "Toolkits"; one of which exists at present (- in two versions the CCW, and the NE Accessible Natural Greenspace Toolkit, developed under contract by John Handley's team at CURE). The other Toolkits the Forum has decided to develop for the Toolbox will cover: Stress (including noise and light pollution); Street Trees; Air Quality; Heat Islands; Flooding and Urban Water Management. In addition the Forum has decided to include a 'tool' to help potential users justify the time and expense involved in using Toolkits from the Toolbox. This was originally referred to as the 'toolkit justifier' but a more acceptable term is the 'Toolkit Pre-Assessment System'. PF and AB have drafted an outline of the Pre-Assessment System which will be circulated for comment after the meeting. The System will be designed as an easily administered self-assessment questionnaire which will be web-based, but which will also exist on paper for those who prefer this way of working.

Members are requested to

1. Check that the questions are appropriate and meet the criteria set out at the end of the paper;
2. Suggest further questions which meet those criteria; and
3. Send details of any peer-reviewed papers which support the assertion that the subject dealt with by any of the questions does in fact related to the topics of the proposed toolkits to PF. [A11](#)

JH informed that NE is looking at similar toolkits which address spatial planning issues and IA advised that SNH was also talking to the Scottish Government about similar guidance documents.

NL advised that University of Manchester has a current research project looking at the urban heat island effect (SCORCHIO) and that Forum member John Handley was involved in this project. John Handley was also the principal investigator in the Adaptation Strategies to Climate Change in an Urban Environment (ASCCUE)

project whose methodology could also be helpful towards the development of these toolkits. NL to arrange a meeting between John Handley, PF and NL to investigate how best to take this forward **A12**
JT offered guidance on intellectual property issues.

7 A Handbook of Urban Ecology

ID reported that 35 chapters have been completed; 10 chapters are in the editorial process and that completion of 8 chapters is still awaited. ID is trying to meet the March 12th deadline for copy set by the publisher, Routledge, with final publication planned for around October 2010. Whilst some of the chapters which were in the original plan might be missing, the final version will have circa 53 chapters, be around 600 pages long, will be comprehensive and without any apparent gaps. ID to contact Natasha Bevan regarding endorsement by UNESCO **A13**.

8 Social Trends- Discovering yourself outside

This publication has been completed, at a total cost of £1,200 for 1500 copies. It is now on the Forum's web site and hard copies are in the process of being distributed to all MPs, MSPs, Members of the Welsh Assembly, and to all other relevant agencies and interested parties.

Agreed that copies would also be distributed to new MPs after the 2010 election **A14**.

9 Multi-cultural participation

This item will be carried forward to the next meeting.

10 Web site

NL reported that the web site is up to date.

GD noted that there was no link from the UNESCO UK MAB web page on the Urban Forum to the Forum's own website and that such a link should be created. GD to supply NL with appropriate details and NL to write to Andy Bell **A15**.

11 Nominees to the Urban Forum and membership of the Forum

Joanne Tippett, School of Environment and Development, University of Manchester had been nominated to join the Forum. Joanne is an expert in community participation, environmental awareness and sustainability. Her CV and application letter had been circulated to the Forum in advance of the meeting. Her nomination was accepted unanimously.

Peter Jarvis has retired from University of Wolverhampton and has tendered his resignation from the Forum. This was accepted with regret and GD expressed the Forum's best wishes to him for the future.

PF proposed a review of the Forum's membership structure to ensure that the Forum remains a centre of excellence and at the forefront of integrated thinking on urban environmentalism. PF suggested that his proposal would also remove the need for eminent members such as PJ to resign should they feel they cannot contribute on a regular basis. PF's proposals will be circulated to members and it was agreed that this item would be on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting of the Forum. **A16**

12 Awards

PC proposed the Crescent Arts Centre refurbishment 2008-2010 for the UK MAB Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence. Members had been circulated details of this proposal in advance of the meeting. Crescent Arts Centre refurbishment 2008-2010 is

an innovative partnership approach which ensured the protection, conservation and enhancement of a breeding colony of Common Swift *Apus apus* during extensive refurbishment of the building. Several Forum members had expressed their support in advance of the meeting.

It was unanimously agreed that Crescent Arts Centre refurbishment should receive the Award. It was also agreed that PC and NL would work up the wording of the citation and that AB would organise the plaque. **A17**

13 Work programme and annual report: Secretary

Secretary to prepare the annual report to year ending 5th April 2010 in advance of the meeting of the Forum on May 11th 2010 **A18**

14 Financial Report

NL presented the financial statement as at 24th February 2010 which showed a net current balance of funds after payment of outstanding liabilities (member's expenses re this meeting, the archives, design and printing of DYO and secretariat to February 2010) of £668. NL also reported that the annual budget requirement to fund the Forums core expenditure (meetings, members and invited speakers travel to meetings, secretariat, web site, awards) was currently running at around £5,700.

CCW and NIEA had each contributed £1,500 to the Forum during financial year 2009/10. JH confirmed that £1,500 would be contributed by NE during this financial year and IA also confirmed that SNH would also be contributing £1,500 to the Forum for this financial year.

PF reported that the funding agencies were hoping to conclude an inter-agency agreement to provide the Forum with funding of £4,000 to be spent on its core work during the next financial year, subject to acceptance of the annual report and work programme.

GD and NL welcomed this initiative and it was agreed that the Forum would find ways of adjusting to the new financial arrangements without jeopardising the work programme.

GD also drew attention to the considerable contribution in unpaid time constantly provided by many members of the Forum.

Given the huge contribution of valuable time by the members to the Forum it was agreed to develop a simple way to record the hours contributed by the members to Forum business so that this could be used to match other sources of funding in-kind, and to demonstrate to existing funders the value the Forum adds to their contribution **A19**.

15 Any other business

No other business was raised.

16 Dates of future meetings.

- Wednesday 11th May 2010 London, UCL
- Wednesday 22nd September 2010 Edinburgh, SNH
- Wednesday 8th December 2010 Atkins, Birmingham

Addendum re Item 5c Shanghai Expo:

Following this meeting, PF reported that he had gone through his e-mails again and found some correspondence between Andrew Bell (Chair, UNESCO UK MAB Committee) and Mr Natarajan Ishwaran, Director, Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences and Secretary, Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme from UNESCO. From this it appears that a Dr. Yi from China is due to be seconded to the MAB Secretariat, possibly starting in Paris on 1 March. It is not explicit that Dr. Yi's presence will expedite MAB's plans for the Shanghai Expo but it appears likely. Mr Natarajan Ishwaran states that MAB's plans for a Shanghai symposium also look good although it may not be recognized as part of Official Shanghai Expo events because of a variety of complicated issues. Mr Natarajan Ishwaran hopes that it will serve the purpose of "re-inventing" urban-MAB at an international level and intends to provide Andrew Bell with more information on the matter.