

Draft Minutes of the UK MAB Urban Forum meeting held 18th January 2012 at University of Manchester.

1. Present

Chris Baines	(CB)	Urban Wildlife Network (by invitation)
John Box	(JB)	Atkins Environment
Peter Cush	(PC)	NIER
Ian Douglas	(ID)	University of Manchester (Chair)
Peter Frost	(PF)	Countryside Council for Wales
David Haley	(DH)	Manchester Metropolitan University (Invited speaker)
John Handley	(JFH)	University of Manchester
Jane Houghton	(JH)	Natural England
Derek Irvine	(DI)	Greenspace Scotland (by invitation)
Philip James	(PJ)	University of Salford
Nigel Lawson	(NL)	University of Manchester (Secretary)
Samantha Lyme	(SL)	Natural England
Alison Millward	(AM)	Independent Consultant
Kerry Morrison	(KM)	University of Salford (Invited speaker)
Joe Ravatz	(JR)	University of Manchester
Richard Scott	(RS)	Landlife
Peter Shirley.	(PS)	Forum Fellow
Celia Spouncer	(CS)	University of Ulster (Invited speaker)
Judy Ling Wong	(JLW)	Black Environment Network
Ambra Burls	(AB)	Bangor University (Vice Chair) via Skype

2. Apologies

Gerald Dawe, Mathew Frith, David Goode, Chris Nevin, Julie Proctor, Terry Robinson, Joanne Tippett

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: All members are reminded to send appropriate publications for inclusion on the Forum's web site to NL. A1
- A2 and A3 Forum archives: JH is arranging their transfer to Natural England.

- A4 Nomination of Buglife’s legal process for UK MAB Urban Forum Award for Excellence. Buglife have again expressed a desire to be considered for this award. ID advised that this is in process and that he will report on it in due course. (Buglife’s application arrived the day after the meeting). **A4**
- A5 News is awaited on the proposal to aim for Biosphere Reserve Status for the Lower Thames Estuary. JH to follow this up **A5**.
- A6 The application by Brighton for Biosphere Reserve status was proceeding and MF undertook to approach Richard Howarth with regard to Brighton and Hove Council hosting a meeting of the Forum. This item is carried forward **A6**
- A7 Review of the Forum accounts on an annual basis on behalf of the Secretariat: ID and other members are urged to identify a suitable auditor. **A7**
- A8 SCOPE/UNESCO project on urban areas of less than 1 million people: ID is awaiting news from SCOPE, UNESCO and the Chinese Academy of Science’s Experts Group and will thereafter develop a framework on the topic on how the Forum might respond and be involved. This item is carried forward **A8**
- A9. Offer by PS to prepare a short summary of EPSRC’s Sustainable Urban Environments (SUE) programme for the Forum has been done.
- A10 to A14 are agenda items and are dealt with below.
- A15 Consideration by MF on how to react to the poor response to the circular to the All Party Parliamentary Groups possibly interested in urban greenspace is awaited **A9**
- A16 has been done
- A 17 Training Sessions for RTPI. SL and AM will investigate further **A10**
- A 18 to A 22 are agenda items and are dealt with below
- A 23 Award to Black Country Living Landscapes Community Involvement Programme. JB reported that he had undertaken the assessment of this programme which undertakes excellent engagement with 83 local groups and about 20 local schools to bring capacity to local people to engage with local wildlife and that he recommends them for the UK MAB Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence. This was agreed. Preparation of the plaque and the award certificate to be arranged by AM, AB and NL **A11**.
- A 24 Potential sites for awards (Brighton White Walks, London River Action Plan, Clapton Park). Information is awaited from MF **A12**
- A 24 is an agenda item and is dealt with below

5. Presentations on linking the arts with urban greenspace issues

- a) David Haley demonstrated the importance of undeveloped greenspaces in the urban environment. He also demonstrated futuristic housing and how the arts can contribute to informing on issues such as the consequences of rising sea levels.
- b) Celia Spouncer demonstrated radical bio-diversity inspired “Green Veins” thinking and new ways of creating urban landscapes through art. . (see: <http://www.place.uk.net/downloads/GreenVeinsProgramme.pdf> and <https://profiles.google.com/108501380148005438079/about>)

- c) Kerry Morrison demonstrated novel ways of engaging with the public and the importance of entering into conversations. She also presented her innovative work in conceptualising the barriers, and in finding solutions, to transform brownfield sites and underused canal side backwaters into front waters.

Discussion centred on the inspirational aspects of all three presentations and on the important role of the artist in bringing the aesthetics of landscape to people's awareness and in particular on the need to look at landscape through the eyes of the artist as well as through those of the scientist.

6. Greenspace Toolkits

ID and PJ distributed their report on the workshop held at the University of Salford on 15th December 2011 on toolkits for the evaluation of urban ecosystem services as well as a preliminary list of existing toolkits and other methods for valuing ecosystem services provided by urban greenspace compiled by ID.

In discussion it was felt that the Forum was well placed to undertake an overview and assessment of toolkits. It was agreed that the Forum should seek to hold a conference/workshop for professionals, including local government officers on toolkit compilation and assessment during 2012 and that the working party that met in Salford in December led by ID, PJ, PF and JFH would produce a plan to be put to the Forum at its next meeting [A13](#).

Following JLW's suggestion that the Forum should seek the advice of members, NGOs and ecological artists, ID asked her and DH to take the lead in making contacts with a view to holding a workshop in 2013 [A14](#).

7. Urban Greening and Future Water for Town and Cities

ID presented the results of a preliminary meeting held earlier in the day to consider this topic comprising ID, JH, JFH, PS, NL and invited experts Prof. Clive Agnew and Dr. Iain White (both of University of Manchester).

Following discussion it was felt that there was scope for the Forum to contribute to this debate and to produce a unique paper/guidance document on this topic. It was agreed that Forum members undertake a series of detailed discussions with other groups such as CIRIA, the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS), the Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI), utility companies such as United Utilities (UU) and Welsh Water, Water UK, Waterwise, the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) and Defra/ the EA with the objective of also holding a conference/workshop on this topic later this year or early in 2013. [A15](#).

PS proposed, and it was agreed, that the title for this initiative should be "Passing Through: Urban Greening and Future Water for Town and Cities".

8. Winding up of the Urban Wildlife Network

PS and CB explained that after 30 years the Urban Wildlife Network (UWT) had been wound up and that a proposal to transfer its assets to the UK MAB Urban Forum had been accepted. Several members of UWT are now also members of the Forum. RS advised that the assets of UWT to be transferred to the Forum are close to £5,000. ID formally thanked PS, AM and CB for their interest and their faith in the Forum and for this important gesture. NL to meet with UWT's secretary to arrange for the formal transfer of the assets to the Forum [A16](#).

9. UK Biodiversity Steering Group

PS reported that Martin Brasher, Head of Defra's Wildlife, Habitats and Biodiversity Division wishes to offer the Forum a seat on the UK Biodiversity Steering Group. It was agreed that this requires further investigation and ID undertook to contact Martin Brasher **A17**. See Martin's powerpoint presentation:

<http://www.ieem.net/docs/Nott%2021%20Martin%20Brasher.pdf>

SL reported that Defra was setting up a Green Infrastructure Partnership (GIP), a scheme which will help to generate more green space in the city, and that she will send the Forum further information for it to consider its potential involvement **A18**

10. Chairmanship of the Forum

ID announced that he had accepted the chairmanship of the Forum for a two year period in 2010 and that he wished to stand down as Chair at the end of 2012. This was accepted with regret. NL advised that he also wished to stand down as Honorary Secretary at the same time but that he would ensure a smooth handover to the appointee of the incoming Chair. NL to instigate an election process for the position of Chair of the Forum **A19**.

11. Membership

PJ and NL conducted the annual review. AM and JLW now meet the criteria for fellowship and were duly elected Fellows of UK MAB Urban Forum.

Members are urged to consider potential new members, and in particular specialists in climate change in urban environments, spatial planning and economic evaluation. It was agreed that the procedure to be followed is for current members to provide a brief pen portrait of potential candidates to the next meeting of the Forum when their suitability would be considered. ALL **A20**.

12. Awards

- Wigan Greenheart: ID is awaiting a response from Mark Chapman **A21**
- Leicester's Eco House: PS agreed to assess **A22**
- Black Environment Network (BEN): JB proposed, and PF seconded, the nomination of BEN for the UK MAB Award for Wildlife Excellence. JB undertook to undertake the assessment process.

JLW advised that she was now to spend some time promoting the Awards and identifying sites worthy of the Award. As part of this initiative she would seek to identify how the Forum can support winners of the Awards, publicise their achievements and good practice through working with a range of environmental magazines and newsletters, and parallel to this making the MAB concept of people and environment better known. She also highlighted the need to generate plain English material on the MAB concept of people and environment for the MAB website and for general promotional use. She further undertook to review the award criteria and to investigate fundraise to cover the costs of travel and expenses for assessing the Awards and would set a target number of Awards for the year. This important initiative was much welcomed and was accepted by the Forum. ID thanked JLW for it.

13. Work programme and annual report

NL reported that the work programme for 2011/12 was on schedule. He provided the meeting with an update on progress on each item in the work programme and on new items added.

14. Financial report: Secretary

NL reported that the current bank balance (reserves) after payment of outstanding liabilities is £3,200. These reserves will be increased to around £8,000 following the transfer of the assets of UWT. NL estimated current general annual expenditure at about £1,500. The only current income is £500 per annum from Countryside Council for Wales. The meeting expressed its appreciation of the action taken by UWT and its thanks to Natural England and to Countryside Council for Wales for their invaluable support. PF reported that he was seeking to initiate an Inter-Agency Memorandum of Agreement to support the Forum **A23**.

15. Any Other Business

JLW drew the meeting's attention to the report "Sowing the Seeds" on play in the natural environment. It offers examples of engaging people with the environment at little or no cost. It is available online at

<http://www.londonsdc.org/documents/Sowing%20the%20Seeds%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf>

16. Dates of future meetings

AM proposed, and the Forum accepted, to hold the next meeting late June in the Black Country to coincide with a Black Country Living Landscape training event. AM to advise NL of the date(s) and the venue. PF proposed an autumn meeting in conjunction with a training event in Cardiff later in the year **A24**.