



The UK Man and the Biosphere Committee Urban Forum

Draft minutes of the UK MAB Urban Forum meeting held 8th February 2013 at Scottish Natural Heritage, Edinburgh

1. Present

Ambra Burls	(AB)	Bangor University (Vice Chair)
Peter Cush	(PC)	Department of Environment Northern Ireland
Samantha Davenport	(SD)	Natural England
Peter Frost	(PF)	Countryside Council for Wales
David Haley	(DH)	Manchester School of Art
Jane Houghton	(JH)	Natural England
Kerry Morrison	(KM)	Salford University
Alison Millward	(AM)	Independent Consultant (Chair)
Chris Nevin	(CN)	Scottish National Heritage
Julie Procter	(JP)	Greenspaces Scotland
Terry Robinson	(TR)	Independent Consultant
Richard Scott	(RS)	Landlife
Peter Shirley	(PS)	Independent
Celia Spouncer	(CS)	Independent Consultant
Judy Ling Wong	(JLW)	Black Environment Network
Duncan Mackay	(DM)	Natural England (Observer)

2. Apologies

John Box, Gerald Dawe, Ian Douglas, Mathew Frith, David Goode, Philip James, Nigel Lawson, Peter Massini, Joe Ravetz, Joanne Tippett.

3. Welcome and introductions

All present introduced themselves and AM welcomed Kerry Morrison to the Forum. Kerry is an in-situ environmental artist – undertaking PhD on brownfield land at Salford University. Duncan MacKay (Natural England) was welcomed as an observer.

4. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes were approved.

5. Matters arising

Outstanding actions from the last meeting were reviewed:

A2 Biosphere Reserve Status for the Lower Thames Estuary:

JH reported that she had discussed the potential of the Lower Thames Estuary Nature Improvement Area to become a Biosphere Reserve with Peter Massini of the Greater London Authority, John Meehan, Parklands Manager of Essex County Council and Brian McDonald (NIA programme manager) and Francis Davies, Natural England's Area Manager. The conclusion was that NIAs are currently focussing on delivering

their NIA agendas, and that Biosphere status could be considered in one or two years' time. JH to keep Forum updated. **A1**

A3 Forum meeting in Brighton and Hove Biosphere to be requested by MF. Carried forward to next meeting. **A2**

A4 Consideration on how to react to the poor response to the circular to the All Party Parliamentary Groups possibly interested in urban greenspace is being taken forward by MF. Carried forward to next meeting. **A3**

A5 Training Sessions for RTPI. SL and AM are taking this forward. **A3**

A6 Defra's People Engagement Group. AM will distribute organisational details and thoughts on how the Forum could contribute to this initiative. **A4**

A7 Greenspace Toolkits: ID and NL would look into organising a local workshop in the North West to which all Forum members would be invited. Carried forward to next meeting. **A5**

A8 Passing Through: Urban Greening and Future Water for Town and Cities. ID undertook consider further on how best to take this topic forward and to report at the next meeting of the Forum. Carried forward to next meeting. **A6** Urban greening and water –SNH undertaking work focussed on social benefits. JP to get in touch with Ian Douglas and let him know what is happening in Scotland. **A7**

A9 Ecosystems Knowledge Network - ID will be contacting them with regard to their possible interest in the Forum's Greenspace Toolkits and Urban Greening and Future Water for Towns and Cities projects. Carried forward to next meeting. **A8**

A10 Possible UK UNESCO MAB Urban Forum/UK SCOPE Urban futures project (Brighton, Bristol, Leicester, Bradford). Andrew Bell who is on the MAB Committee has expressed interest and ID will take this forward Carried forward to next meeting. **A9**

A11 Peter Shirley had agreed to maintain the Forum's accounts and to be responsible maintaining for the Forum's web site and the handover had successfully taken place

A12 Done

A13 Done

A14 All to continue to think about new members to invite. **A10**

A15 Done

A16 AB and JLW undertook to develop a protocol for the use of the Forum's logo and that this will be published on the Forum's web site. Carried forward to next meeting. **A11**

A17 Wigan Greenheart: ID reported that he had been in contact with Mark Champion and that he was taking this forward. **A12**

A18 Investigation of the regeneration programmes in St. Helen's towards potential recognition by the Forum by John Handley is pending. **A13**

A19 Gordon Square (University of London) see below.

A20 Bankside Open Spaces Trust see below

A21 Olympic Park: AB to contact Nigel Dunnett to seek a post-games update. Carried forward to next meeting. **A14**

4. Membership

Enquiry received from John Miller who would like to become a member. He has been invited to send in CV to Forum.

In discussing whether to invite prospective members to attend for a meeting before submitting their request for membership and CV. JP suggested that inviting a member to make a presentation could be a good way to introduce people to the Forum.

It was agreed that prospective new members will be invited to make a presentation to a forthcoming Forum meeting covering why they are enthusiastic to join; what they can offer; and what they can add to the mix of existing skills. AM to implement. **A15**
TR suggested that one meeting might not be enough for new members to fully understand the role of the Forum. Forum agreed to use its discretion in extending invitations for prospective members and others to observe business meetings.

Fellowships:

AM to contact Philip James to complete the annual review of the membership list to bring forward any proposals for fellowships for the next meeting. **A16**

AM to request a list of secretariat tasks for the Forum from Nigel Lawson. **A17**

5. Awards

Wigan Greenheart

Progress report by ID/NL carried forward to next meeting. **A18**

Gordon Square

Alan Scott had circulated a proposal for an Award for Excellence to be made to the University of London for biodiversity improvement of Gordon Square, a formal London Square whist still maintaining the historic and cultural value of the site.

Views expressed included the following:

We would like to see networking between the different London squares.

We need to encourage the squares to share good practice amongst themselves.

The London Parks and Greenspace Forum Report on London Squares would be more eligible for an Award as it takes a strategic approach to biodiversity improvements across London squares.

We could consider making an award to all squares in which there have been biodiversity improvements.

If University of London had come forward to show how they had been innovative across whole landowning estate that would have been more suited to the Award.

Guerrilla gardening is gaining momentum.

Summary – not all supported the award to the Gordon Square proposal. However, we agreed to put forward useful suggestions, so that if the University of London would like to be the first university estate to adapt their greenspaces and open spaces to biodiversity they are welcome to be considered again in two years time.

AM to report back the conversation to Alan Scott. AS to be delegated to talk to Univ London to advise them to look strategically at biodiversity improvements across their estate. **A19**

Bankside Open Spaces Trust

JH tabled a proposal for an Award to be made to the Bankside Open Spaces Trust following a visit to BOST with Alison Millward and Samantha Davenport in November 2012.

It was agreed that the Award would be made for BOST's:

- multifarious good practice in community engagement demonstrated by the high level of use of the greenspaces managed by BOST
- role as a facilitator to unite the local community and find solutions when there was tension regarding inappropriate management of greenspace.

- engagement of homeless volunteers from St Mungos to provide work experience as part of a transition out of homelessness. (NB: BOST is not unique in this respect, the Forum recognises that other groups are doing similar good practice e.g. Cyrenians in Scotland).
- success with their food projects in local schools and estates.
- sustainability as a charity over a number of years, their survival though securing a range of funding mechanisms, their opportunism and flexibility.

JH to notify BOST, and draft the citation. **A20**

Award Criteria

We discussed the discussion paper put forward by AS and MF on the criteria for the Award and the following points were made:

Award will pull its weight if it goes out and encourages people to do good practice. The current criteria may be too limiting. Perhaps we should have different kinds of award - for excellence, innovation, personal achievement over a whole career, good practice

DH gave the example of SIWEM having 3 awards for excellence; whole career; and national and international significance.

We acknowledged that other award giving bodies target specific groups and themes.

We also acknowledged that the citation can identify the specific reasons for an Award and distinguish between them.

In assessing any proposal, we should consider the layers of achievement, good practice and multiple benefits i.e. Ecosystem Services.

We don't want to compete with other awards

Retain flexibility of criteria so that people can make the case to show how they relate to the award's intentions.

Avoid a requirement for innovation. However, the Forum has always looked at the pushing of the boundaries and trail blazing. These often don't get recognised in a project until some time later. We should ask the question – what difference does the project make?

The award provides a focal point to show what is missing from current practice.

Suggestion for 3 different awards

The 'Award' is an old fashioned term – it's about having a hook to promote good/excellent practice and the overall urban/ greenspace agenda.

We concluded that the award should be about inspiring practice.

AM to feedback discussion to Alan and ask him to think further. **A21**

6. Work programme mini-workshops

AM introduced the workshops and the intention for the Forum to move to a thematic way of working.

At the last meeting in November, Forum members were invited to focus on specific themes and suggested a number of priorities and projects. For example MAB could have an overview of initiatives at European level, and share good practice with politicians to increase their understanding of the urban environmental agenda.

Individuals had volunteered to lead different work strands, and 6 mini workshops took place to develop project plans for some of these ideas. Each workshop was asked to address the:

- potential benefit for UK MAB Urban Forum objectives of taking action on the topic of interest

- objectives of proposed action
- desirable outcomes from proposed action
- action format (paper, publication, seminar, conference, briefing, DVD, PowerPoint etc)
- timetable
- membership of task and finish group

The workshops were:

- 1 Arts seminar - led by Judy Ling Wong
- 2 Contributions to IALE European Congress symposium on landscape scale ecological processes in urban areas - led by Alison Millward on behalf of Philip James
- 3 Promoting community engagement in an era of declining greenspace quality and the need for climate change adaptation - led by Chris Nevin and Julie Procter
- 4 Promoting pro-environmental behaviour change and green health literacy - led by Ambra Burls
- 5 Strengthening links with UK biospheres - led by Jane Houghton
- 6 Content development for a CPD presentation for Planners - led by Sam Davenport

All workshop leads to summarise in a side of A4 and send to AM to slot into a work programme going forward. These summaries/plans will also act as a starting point for the next steps by the working groups. **A22 (please see attachments to these draft minutes)**

Task and finish groups to take forward their plans. **A23**

7. Financial report by PS

Peter Shirley has taken over responsibility for the Forum's finances from Nigel Lawson and provided a financial report.

The Forum has £5,900 but majority of this was received from the winding up of the Urban Wildlife Partnership.

Contributions from country agencies:

CCW has already contributed £500 - received with thanks.

DoE NI will be contributing £250.

Natural England – will be contributing £500 for this year but can't commit beyond this year.

SNH hope to contribute £300.

Country Agencies to complete making their contributions. **A24**

8. Any Other Business

Peter Shirley confirmed that he has taken over the Forum web-site. It is under his purview. PS will look into making more use of web-site. **A25**

Pete Frost will be reducing his hours at CCW to 3 days per week. This may give him spare time to progress work for Forum. PF offered to provide his mobile telephone number so that Forum members are able to contact him when not at work. **A26**

9. Dates of future meetings

12th June – room booked in London – normal business type meeting. Suggested agenda items for the June agenda:

- Use of the internet and media for the Forum (PE we need you)
- Fellowship update (PJ).
- Knowledge exchange and research - archive – we need to think more widely about how to make our archive available digitally.
- Agreed to have 2 sessions of 30 mins each (within main business) for each task and finish group to meet.

9-12 September 2013 - Agreed to link a Forum meeting to the 2013 IALE Congress in Manchester if the Forum secures an input (which it has). Precise day of meeting tbc.

KM to report to future meeting about the options for setting up a face book and twitter presence. A27