



The UK Man and the Biosphere Committee Urban Forum

Minutes of the UK MAB Urban Forum meeting held 12th June 2013 at Natural England, London

1. Present

Ambra Burls	(AB)	Centre for Sustainable Healthcare (Vice Chair)
Samantha Davenport	(SD)	Natural England
Peter Frost	(PF)	Natural Resources Wales
Jane Houghton	(JH)	Natural England
Nigel Lawson	(NL)	University of Manchester
Peter Massini	(PM)	Natural England
Alison Millward	(AM)	Independent Consultant (Incoming Chair)
Terry Robinson	(TR)	Independent Consultant
Alan Scott	(AS)	Independent Consultant
Celia Spouncer	(CS)	Independent Consultant

2. Apologies

Ian Douglas, Kerry Morrison, Peter Cush, Chris Nevin, Julie Procter, Richard Scott, Peter Shirley, Judy Ling Wong, John Box, Gerald Dawe, Mathew Frith, David Haley, Philip James.

3. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the 8th February 2013 meeting were approved.

4. Matters arising

Outstanding actions from the last meeting:

A2 Biosphere Reserve Status for Brighton: AB to make contact with Richard Howarth with MF's approval (as currently out of the country) to arrange Forum visit.

A1

A3 All Party Parliamentary Groups: Consideration on how to react to the poor response to the circular to the APPGroups and their interest in urban greenspace to be carried forward by MF to next meeting. **A2**

A4 Defra's People Engagement Group (PEG): AM will distribute organisational details and thoughts on how the Forum could contribute to this initiative. AM explained the remit of the group and their research findings on the best messages to use for getting the public to engage more in biodiversity issues: that nature is not able to adapt quickly enough to human impacts; and the loss of beneficial contact with nature for people arising from development pressures. PM noted that these narratives were not new. NL commented on biodiversity parameters and discussed how urban environmental problems could be attached to flood related issues. Making links between danger for the communities, wildlife conservation and SUDS may help. CS reported on the importance of engaging particular sections of society, i.e. young people and that there are positive links to be made with the arts. JH reported on another study looking at barriers to engagement with the natural environment and

providing training and information. PEG is now being chaired by Savita Custead – a communications expert. DH suggested the best strategy is a diversity of approach. Getting stuck in to activate things and generate learning and behavioural change works best. AM will circulate more information when PEG produces something in the public domain. **A3**

A5 Greenspace Toolkits: NL and ID will still look into organising a workshop in the North West Region, even though Greenspace North West is no longer operative and GENECON and Mersey Forest are now the new leads. NL asked the Forum how best to take this forward. Members discussed the need for clarity about what exactly a toolkit is. JH reported on two projects on toolkits: a) Tom Butterworth is doing work on a toolkit based on *I-tree* and linking it with other toolkits; b) a one year old project by David Fanaroff which is a web portal/signposting website providing answers to common questions from the public domain. Discussion is taking place to find the appropriate channel to evaluate this system.

PF reported that what we lack is a way of working out what natural resources societies need and having an evidence-based rationale to work out standards to measure what is there against what is needed. There is a chance that funding may be available from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) for the Forum for a very targeted piece of research in this area. PF reported that NRW is now specifically aiming to evaluate and map ecosystem services. PF named a number of members who are still hoping to take this further i.e. ID, AB, JP and NL. PF commented on the measurements and choices needing to be clearer and that we don't yet know exactly what we need. NL suggested including John Handley in the group and will suggest this to John as well as Paul Nolan and Susanna Gill from Mersey Forest.

PF was asked to write a short statement about what is required from a funder's point of view in order to clarify the work that is needed. CS asked if there are any parallels in Europe. PF replied that there are links across international fora. DH asked for clarification about toolkits and reported on the Biospheric Foundation, an open space for food generation.

PF emphasised that we need to be clear about what ecosystem services are required and what exactly needs doing to remedy deficits. TR sounded a note of caution that defining and quantifying a need for a single toolkit may not be possible. PM agreed with TR and suggested that the priority should be to provide access to reliable information to enable decision making. He described a toolkit on flooding which is based on simple information. JH reported on a list of toolkits which is being drawn up and how this could be added to. PF was asked to contact the above mentioned working group members with a report to take this forward. AB was nominated as one of the link people to move this forward. **A4**

A6 Urban Greening and Future Water for Town and Cities. To be carried forward to next meeting by ID. **A5**

A7 Forum/UK SCOPE Urban Futures project (Brighton, Bristol, Leicester, Bradford). To be carried forward to next meeting by ID. **A6**

A11 Forum logos. AB reported on her discussion with Ian White at UNESCO UK's central office. Ian has agreed to review all logos used by the Forum and has suggested that a specific Urban Forum logo could be devised. AB will keep the Forum informed and action this for further discussion at the next meeting. **A7**

5. Awards

Wigan Greenheart: NL reported on the site assessment and that JH and NL agreed that the site is not yet fully integrated. However, after ID's enquiry with the site's

managers, it seems they are still keen to work towards the award and this will be reviewed by the Forum in due course.

St. Helen's: pending and to be carried forward to next meeting .

Bankside Open Spaces Trust: pending and to be carried forward to next meeting.

Olympic Park: AB reported on contact with Nigel Dunnett to seek a post-games update. Members discussed the need for the Park to be assessed at a later date as it is still in transition. The Forum needs to ascertain whether the site will remain viable as an accessible and well managed green space with community engagement. This item has therefore been removed from the current action list.

Gordon Square (University of London): AS reported on the assessment of the Square. He considers that the Square doesn't have any specific feature/use which warrants a Forum Award and that he has advised them to go for a Green Flag award instead.

Award Criteria

AS reported on discussion with MF over the criteria. They felt that innovation, excellence and providing 'something different' should be considered as key factors. Members agreed that 'innovation and inspiring others' should be the emphasis. PM and JH highlighted the need for showcase models of good practice which focused on solutions. JH raised the opportunity for communication with local nature reserves. AS suggested giving a certain number of awards per year and that this would not limit a site from receiving further awards. AM stated that an award can only be given for achievement at a particular moment in time. AS suggested there should be a small panel from the Forum to assess all awards and that this could be done once a year followed by a report to the Forum. A number of volunteers put themselves forward to form such a panel (NL, SD, JH, AS, PM). This will give more scope for publicity and support to the sites and raise awareness of the Forum (PM). MF and AS will put a report together and present it at the next meeting. **A8**

6. Wider public awareness of the Forum.

Discussion took place about the opportunities for wider awareness raising and networking by the Forum. This was put forward for discussion at the next meeting including social media to be led by KM. **A9**

7. Membership review

AM distributed the current list of members and their eligibility for fellowship status. Fellowships for AB, NL and PS were approved and it was suggested that PC's name should be considered at the next meeting. AM should add new members to the Forum membership list and circulate it so that eligibility can be monitored by all and duly actioned when appropriate. **A10**

8. Archive update

JH reported that the Forum's documents are now safely archived and can be accessed within 48 hours. NL suggested that some of the archive could be uploaded to the Forum website if this was well maintained. Some material could/should be scanned i.e. publications by the Forum. It was suggested an archiving student should be asked to generate an index. It became clear that there are other papers of note still in the possession of individuals which could also be indexed, scanned and made available to enquirers e.g. some of George Barker's papers currently held at the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust. JH agreed to explore how she could support this document gathering, selection and scanning exercise. **A11**

9. Annual Report and Work Programme

It was agreed that the report/programme document reflects the work of the Forum. The members were asked to put forward any amendments which might be required. AM will then bring the document completely up to date and post on website. **A12**

10. Task and Finish working groups.

Arts Roadshow. JLW produced a report of the current situation read out by AB. DH added a comment on Society for Ecological Restoration (SER) publicising the roadshow. CS said that the roadshow is about seeing things differently and working differently on issues such as food consumption and with the performing arts sector. NL added that his daughter may be interested in participating as an artist. DH gave a brief summary of the aims of the roadshow and what will happen for those who were not fully aware of the details and connections between art, ecology and people and the learning which will come from this process. There will be a final product in the form of a report/paper at the end of it. NL asked if schools/colleges will be involved. CS explained how schools may be difficult to engage with, but ideas are still being worked out and may develop. DH suggested that this roadshow cannot be all things to all people and funding should be targeted according to need/opportunity in a given locality. PM suggested River of Flowers as a point of reference.

International Assoc. of Landscape Ecology European Congress – Joint Urban Forum/Salford Univeristy led Symposium 11th September. AM reported that the group had been overwhelmed with offers of papers for the Symposium, which is being organised by PJ and AM in Manchester. SD, RS and NL are presenting papers and DH is leading a walk. AM to request a reduced conference fee for Forum presenters. The next Forum meeting will take place the day after the Forum's symposium on the *morning of 12th September (please note date change from that discussed at the meeting)*.

Pro-environmental behaviour change and green heath agendas. AB will resend the background information she presented last September to elicit interest from other Forum members as this could become a campaign by the Forum to help develop green health literacy and the inherent pro-environmental behaviour change. DH and CS suggested they would also be interested to be involved with this theme once the Art Roadshow is further developed.

Biosphere Reserves. JH reported on the work of the group and ideas for a workshop in Aberystwyth and/or Brighton to enhance understanding of 'urban biosphere' values. PF added that this would fit in with the imminent update of the MAB Madrid Action Plan. PF suggested how we might strengthen the UK MAB Committee's engagement in urban matters by liaising with specific Reserves and promoting the Urban Forum's work within the ICC. Actions are to organise a workshop and report back before the next meeting. AM will attend the UK MAB meeting remotely on 18th June.

CPD for planners. SD reported on her assessment of RTPI training and about a discussion by the working group to come up with something more interactive. General discussion took place about the need for planners to have more proactive and imaginative training. SD will send around a summary to help people express an interest in working with this and it will be revisited in the September and/or December meetings. DH suggested that the paradigm should be to 'plan things in' in terms of ecology at early stages of planning. CS suggested architects are the specific group we need to influence.

Promoting Community Engagement. Members read the report by Chris Nevin on what the Forum could do. It was suggested this could be another Forum campaign funded with Lottery Money, persuading BIG Lottery to continue to support the Forum in promoting Community Engagement through the links members have with their own networks. PM asked what could our niche be in this, what can we do as a Forum? JH suggested the Forum could act as an advocate for community groups to reduce the loss of green spaces. AM suggested we could produce evidence-based intelligence to influence positive green infrastructure models and good practice. AS suggested we should bring selected information together to empower communities to make things actually happen. Members discussed the need for the Forum to think of this carefully and distil what we can do that hasn't already been done. PF asked whether this should be part of our work or whether there were other organisations already doing this? Others felt that as a Think Tank, we should be highlighting what community groups could do to empower themselves. The group are asked to review these comments and confirm the strategy for the campaign. DH commented on the example of the Permaculture movement as an example of good practice.

11. Summary of accounts

AM reported on the Forum's accounts and thanked the funders (CCW/NRW, NE, DENI, SNH). The Forum's finances are in reasonable shape at this moment in time.

12. AOB

National childhood campaign is in full swing. JLW to report to Forum.

RS and DH are leading on developing a bid for the Society for Ecological Restoration 2015 conference to be held in Manchester. Forum has been asked to offer letter of support. AM to supply. **A12**

SD reported on the expansion of Nature Improvement Areas in England as a science driven programme for increasing biodiversity, that the Forum might want to monitor closely.

The legal status of Forum as an unincorporated organisation without charitable status governed by terms of reference and publishing audited annual accounts was confirmed to CS for the purpose of funding applications.

13. Date of next meeting. Thursday 12th September, Newton Building, Room G50, Salford University. **Meeting 10.00-12.00** to be followed buy lunch and a local walk (weather permitting) until 3pm.