

**DRAFT Minutes of the UK MAB Urban Forum meeting held 12th September  
2013 at the University of Salford**

**1. Present**

Ambra Burls	(AB)	Centre for Sustainable Healthcare (Vice Chair)
Peter Cush	(PC)	DoENI
Samantha Davenport	(SD)	Natural England
Philip James	(PJ)	University of Salford
Nigel Lawson	(NL)	University of Manchester
Judy Ling Wong	(JLW)	Black Environment Network (Vice Chair)
Alison Millward	(AM)	Independent Consultant (Chair)
Kerry Morrison	(KM)	University of Salford
Richard Scott	(RS)	Landlife
Peter Shirley	(PS)	Independent

**2. Apologies**

Gerald Dawe, Ian Douglas, Mathew Frith, Peter Frost, David Haley, John Handley, Jane Houghton, Chris Nevin, Julie Procter, Celia Spouncer, Terry Robinson, Alan Scott.

**3. Minutes of last meeting**

The minutes of the 12<sup>th</sup> June 2013 meeting were approved.

**4. Matters arising**

Matters arising from last meeting:

**A1 Brighton & Hove Biosphere Reserve**

AB has made contact with Richard Howarth and reported that the Biosphere Reserve application has been submitted to UNESCO. AB and AM advised on the focus and tone of the application, reflecting that this is the first biosphere reserve that is urban in character. The Forum has provided a letter of support and a response on the appropriateness of the application to UNESCO via AM and AB respectively.

It has been agreed that Richard and the Biosphere partners will host a visit on 11<sup>th</sup> November in Brighton, allowing the Forum to consider how we can continue to support the project.

**A2 Parliamentary Group**

AM suggested that given thoughts were beginning to turn to the next general election it may be appropriate to switch our focus from the APPGs to MP engagement and messaging. NL reported that despite a comprehensive mail-out of *Discover Yourself Outside* in advance of the last general election, there had not been any responses from MPs. AB has 10 copies of DY0, NL 20 and Landlife some more but total unknown.

NL recommended personal contact with key people as a better approach. SD offered support from Natural England to provide the Forum with details of MPs who may be interested in, or sympathetic to, the messages of DYO **A1**.

JLW highlighted how communicating ideas and manifestos had changed since the publication of DYO in 2010. She cited how the National Trust's campaign on Natural Childhood had developed into an independent campaigning charity *Wild Network* and asked whether the Forum wished to link up with this organisation. PS suggested that the Forum should keep a watching brief on what several organisations (such as the Wild Network, The Wildlife Trusts, RSPB, CPRE etc) were saying and to make targeted interventions to support, contribute to or counter their debates.

PC suggested that we might need to simplify our messaging to a few key points and provide counter arguments to the negative urban messaging that sometimes emerges from organisations such as CPRE and RSWT (eg on brownfield sites and alien urban species). We need to refresh our view on simple messaging, favour personal approaches to individuals and align ourselves with other networks. SD to draft a two-side Communications Strategy and ideas to Sam by end of October please **A2**.

### **A3 Defra's People Engagement Group**

AM reported that PEG will be presenting at the Communicate conference in early November. This is the first time that PEG will share their research and approach publically. AM to circulate note when one becomes available **A3**.

### **A4 Greenspace Toolkits – thought piece/report for web**

PF has prepared a specification for the Forum for a scoping exercise to identify toolkits which can be used to assess ecosystem services. ID, NL, AB and JP have commented on the first draft of the specification. PF is to update the specification and circulate it to the Forum **A4**. It appears unlikely that ID will have the time to do this work for PF on behalf of the Forum. Another volunteer is needed. Based on the initial draft there was consensus that further clarity on the number and scope of the toolkits to be reviewed would be helpful. AM offered to send PF a summary of the Forum's understanding of the task and the time that would be appropriate to spend on the work for his consideration (estimated at four days of work for a circa £1,000 fee/donation to add an assessment of the quality of each existing toolkit) **A5**.

### **A5 Passing Through: Urban greening and future water for towns and cities**

To be deferred for a few months.

### **A6 Urban futures project**

ID is liaising with Helen Ross from Australia about an email survey.

### **A7 Use of Forum's logo**

AB presented two options for a Forum logo which have been developed in consultation with UNESCO. The Forum voted unanimously for option 2 which incorporates an independent Urban Forum logo. AB has asked Ian White at UNESCO to check that we are using the correct UNESCO logos on our website. AB will send an image file of the logo to PS as soon as Ian White makes a vector/high res. version available [**A6**] so that he can update the website **A7**.

## **A8 Award criteria**

MF and AS reported in advance of the meeting that they have refined the criteria to take into account the discussion of the previous meeting. AM will meet with MF and AS in early October to finalise the paper **A8**.

## **A9 Social media**

KM reported options for how the Forum might make use of social media and requested that all members familiarise themselves with Facebook, LinkedIn and Google Circle in preparation for the next meeting **A9**. These applications and Twitter will be demonstrated at the next meeting (by AB for LinkedIn; PS for Twitter; KM for Google Circle and Facebook) to help members agree on the most appropriate option for the Forum **A10**.

## **A10 Membership Review**

PC was confirmed as a Fellow of the Forum.

## **A11 Archive**

PS and SD suggested that papers and documents in their possession including Bunny Teagle's field notes for *The Endless Village* (the first flora survey of Birmingham and the Black Country) and various NCC publications and newsletters on urban wildlife be incorporated into the Forum's archive. This was agreed by the meeting. PS and SD are to contact JH to arrange this **A11**.

## **5. Work programme progress reports**

### **Landscape scale change - IALE Congress, 9-12 September 2013**

PJ (Salford University) led on the development of a symposium about *Changing urban landscapes using ecological processes*, with support from KM, DH and AM (on behalf of the Forum). Over 300 people from around the world attended the congress.

PJ reported that:

- 22 people took part in the urban walk led by PJ and DH
- 30 people attended the Salford University/Forum symposium and more attended the Greater Manchester Landscapes symposium
- 9 forum members were involved in the Congress overall (as convenors, speakers and participants)

The *Changing urban landscapes* symposium proceedings are available on Salford University's website and will also be available from the Forum's website, together with NL's paper from the *Greater Manchester Landscapes* symposium. JHa provided a key note speech and NL will ask JHa about putting this on the Forum website too **A12**.

AM's conclusions from the *Changing urban landscapes* symposium were that:

1. the evidence base of the species make-up of a wide variety of post-industrial urban landscapes is building and we are beginning to be able to identify axiophytes ie native species that hold the most interest for urban ecologists because they say something about where these plants have invaded from (eg coastal habitats) or which have been able to persist (from ancient woodland) in spite of recent habitat changes

2. we now have a better understanding of the complex mosaic of vertical and horizontal habitats within the urban landscape, varying in height above ground and distance from the centre that can be used in a very sophisticated way with species mixes that have the greatest chance of survival
3. careful interpretation is needed to explain species richness in relation to patch size and distribution and in particular the proximity of species-rich donor sites
4. there is widening acceptance/tolerance of the exuberant, cosmopolitan diversity of species and plant assemblages (typically part natural and part man made) that now define the post-industrial landscapes of our urban areas and defy classification into accepted systems such as Rodwell's NVCS for the UK
5. more debate is needed to arrive at a more integrated ecologically and socially based classification of post-industrial landscapes and how they can best be manipulated for multiple benefits (not just ecosystem services) as the territory (as well as the human population) of the urban areas of the globe continues to expand
6. we still need to persuade, and make it easier for, more people to access and tarry in urban landscapes to fully benefit from contact with the flora and fauna in these places
7. increasing interest is being shown by researchers and practitioners in how to improve the ecological qualities of the urban matrix of houses and buildings, not just the network of green and blue infrastructure.

### **Arts Roadshow**

The task group has been meeting regularly. The first event, to be held in London, is now confirmed for 22nd-23rd February 2014. JLW will provide a full update on the programme and funding arrangements will be presented to the next Forum meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2013 **A13**.

### **Urban Biosphere Reserves**

The Forum's future contribution to the development of urban biosphere reserves in the UK will be reviewed after the visit to Brighton, Hove & Lewes Downs BR in November.

### **CPD for Planners**

SD progressing.

### **Promoting Community Engagement**

Following on from JP and CNs last paper AM will offer support for taking this forward **A14**.

### **Textbook on Urban Ecology**

PJ reported that this book (co-authored by himself and ID) has now gone to the publishers and they are expecting comments back in October. The publication date is set for July 31<sup>st</sup> 2014. PS will put a link to Routledge's webpage that lists the details of ID's forthcoming publications **A15**.

### **Pro-environmental behaviours**

AB has developed and piloted coaching for NHS staff to enable people to identify where they are with their sustainability approach. There is scope for this to be developed as a Forum project. AB will circulate paper **A16**.

### **AOB**

Wigan Greenheart are still keen to achieve an award and we can expect this in approximately a year's time. NL was asked to ensure that they understood that the criteria for the award was changing and that we would prefer them to apply against the new criteria **A17**.

NL and JHa have also visited Northwich Community Forest and will again ensure that the applicants are aware of the changed criteria.

AM and JH will be presenting the award for Bankside Open Spaces Trust on 28<sup>th</sup> September.

AB has been approached about an award for the Bardsey Island Trust for their work on a sustainable urban development. AB will bring it to the Forum if they provide a brief as requested.

AB made the Forum aware of an imminent event hosted by the UK Wildlife Gardening Forum on October 21<sup>st</sup>. This is their first conference on the subject of Human Health and Wildlife Gardening and is being held at the Coventry University Hospital which is an NHS Forest and Outer Space site, thus combining the event with a visit to see and hear about the latter initiatives. Flyer attached for members' attention.

Project Wild Thing, with the aim of reaching people via media, has been launched. Clips are available for anyone to use as a resource on JLW's Dropbox and from YouTube.

### **Financial Report**

PS reported that up until 12<sup>th</sup> September the total funds available = £7350.42. There remains a need for the Forum to generate further income.

### **Dates of next meetings**

Monday 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2013, Brighton. Site visit in the morning to the Biosphere Reserve followed by Forum meeting in the afternoon. Accommodation is available for long distance travellers on the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> and AB is provisionally booking 5 rooms at a special rate agreed between Rich Howorth and Jurys Inn. *Please contact Ambra in the first instance if you would like to book a room.*

Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2014, Defra, Nobel House, Smith Square, London, probably mid morning followed by lunch. This follows on from the first of the Arts Roadshow which will be held in London on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb.

June, 2014 location tba (offers welcome).

September, 2014, Belfast.

*Thanks to PJ for organising venue and lunch for the Salford meeting and the guided walk to The Meadows and Peel Park afterwards by Mike Savage (Red Rose Forest).*