

The UK-MAB Urban Forum

www.ukmaburbanforum.org.uk

Annual Report 2009/10 and Provisional Work Programme 2010/11



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THE UK-MAB URBAN FORUM

The Urban Forum of the UK Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Committee is a network of specialists, practitioners and thinkers involved with nature conservation in urban areas. Its mission is to raise awareness, stimulate research, influence policy, improve the design and management of urban systems, and push urban biodiversity and nature conservation up the social and political agenda. Its distinctive contribution to this goal is integrated thinking. The Urban Forum tries to reflect and express these specialisms, and the many complex realities they represent. In the breadth of its agenda and the range of its membership, it is unique within the UK.

Members of the Urban Forum come from a wide variety of backgrounds from voluntary organisations to local authorities, government agencies and the private sector: from those primarily concerned with conserving “nature” – plants, wildlife, biodiversity – to those, researchers and practitioners, who work with people and deal with the human use of green space. Currently there are some 27 members who collectively contribute to the continuing reputation of the UK as a centre of excellence in this field. The networking and multi-disciplinary approach which is the hallmark of the Urban Forum is a source of new insights whose promulgation to a wider audience is seen as one of the Forum’s key roles.

The Urban Forum meets four times a year, but much of its work is done through networking and informal sub-groups. In order to maximise the contribution and commitment of its members, all of whom work in a voluntary capacity and have heavy professional workloads of their own, it sets annual work programmes with a strategic framework and realistic targets for delivery.

The Urban Forum was established as a working group in 1988. Its main work has been in publishing papers, preparing comments on national issues and policies, generating new concepts, guidelines and research, organising conferences and workshops, and networking with other expert groups. Some of its work is done in collaboration with other organisations. It also awards the UK-MAB Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence (which includes the MAB logo) to key demonstration projects – a process that involves site visits and appraisals.

ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10

Activities

- The Forum's publication, Discover Yourself Outside, co-authored by Ambra Burls, Grant Luscombe and Alison Millward has been completed and is on the Forum web site. 1,500 copies have been printed and have been distributed to all Westminster MPs, Members of the Welsh Assembly, Members of the Scottish Parliament and to all other appropriate stakeholders.
- The Forum organised a workshop facilitated by Peter Frost at the International Conference on Human Ecology at University of Manchester June 29th to July 3rd 2009 and Gerald Dawe delivered a keynote speech.
- The Handbook of Urban Ecology, edited by Ian Douglas and David Goode, is nearing completion and will be published by Routledge in 2010
- The Forum's symposium on street trees 'Do Street Trees Have a Future' has been scheduled for May 12th 2010 at University College, London.
- The guidance covering the award process has been reviewed by Nigel Lawson and Gerald Dawe and is now on the web site.
- The Forum's web site has been redesigned and modernised.
- Gerald Dawe responded to ADAS's consultation process on Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land.

Awards

- Meanwhile Wildlife Gardens, Kensington and Chelsea MIND.
- Crescent Arts Centre refurbishment 2008-2010, Belfast.

Meetings

- Regular quarterly meetings of the Forum (May, September and December 2009 and February 2010)
- Gerald Dawe and Ambra Burls to meetings of the UK MAB Parent Committee
- Grant Luscombe to Natural England's Vision 2060 workshop in London, September 9 2009
- Ambra Burls to EuroMAB meeting in Slovakia , 27-30 October, 2009
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Site visits

- Forum members attending the meeting of the Forum on 23rd September 2009 visited Giants Park and the Connswater Community Greenway, Belfast.

Guest presentations to meetings

- Andrew Bell, Chair, National MAB Committee (9th December 2009).
- Nigel Dunnett, Department of Landscape, University of Sheffield and Director of Green Roof Centre, University of Sheffield (9th December 2009)
- John Little, Grass Roof Company (9th December 2009)

Membership

New Members

The Forum is delighted to welcome the following new members:

- Paul Evans, Freelance writer and broadcaster
- Jane Houghton, Natural England
- Joanne Tippett, School of Environment and Development, University of Manchester.

Resignations

The Forum has, with regret, accepted the resignation of:

- Peter Jarvis who has retired from University of Wolverhampton.

Financial Statement to year ending 5th April 2010

The general expenditure of the Forum to year ending 5th April 2010 to cover the Forum's core work

(Cost of meetings of the Forum, members and invited speaker's travel expenses in attending meetings of the Forum which could not be recovered elsewhere, production of award plaques, maintaining the secretariat and maintaining the web site):

£5,752.72

Production of Discover Yourself Outside (including £200 to an external researcher for the literature review) amounted to £1,455.00.

Other non-recurring expenditure items:

- Travel to EuroMAB meeting in Slovakia £ 827.00
- New web site £ 500.00
- International Conference on Human Ecology £1,000.00

Total £3,782.00

Bank balance (net) at 5th April 2010: £2,707.97

Outstanding income to year ending 5th April 2010 (from Natural England): £1,500.00

Outstanding liability occurred during year ending 5th April 2010: Logging system (Forum archives): estimated at £ 450.00

Reserves to fund the Forum's projects: £3,757.97

Projected income from the Forum's funders (Natural England, Countryside Council for Wales, Scottish Natural Heritage and Northern Ireland Environment Agency) to year ending 5th April 2011 to fund the Forum's core work: £4000.00

The Forum's conference 'Do Street Trees have a Future' is expected to break even.

The Forum acknowledges the considerable contribution in unpaid time constantly provided by many members of the Forum.

2010/2011 Provisional Work Programme

Core Work

Topic	Project	Leader	Targets
MAB Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence	Developing the Award	Gerald Dawe	Develop Award plaques. Continue review of existing Award sites.
Contributing to MAB	UK MAB committee	Pete Frost / Gerald Dawe	Ensure Forum liaises effectively with parent committee.
Urban Biosphere	Applying the Biosphere Reserve concept to urban areas	Pete Frost	To report progress from the UK on the application of the Biosphere Reserve concept to human settlements and to collaborate internationally on the achievement of target 23.1 from the UNESCO MAB Madrid Action Plan: To facilitate the integration of urban areas into Biosphere Reserves.
The Urban Forum website	Development and maintenance	Urban Forum Secretariat	To ensure the website acts as an effective means to communicate the Forum's work to interested parties
Maintaining the Urban Forum's financial security		Gerald Dawe and Secretariat	To secure sufficient funds for the Forum's core costs and ensure funds are secured to implement work programme projects.
'Diversity and Disadvantage'		Judy Ling Wong	Addressing Equal Opportunities / Women's and Minority rights within the existing work-stream.
Membership of the Urban Forum	To attract appropriate nominees to the Urban Forum	Members Membership Committee	To ensure that the Forum membership continues to be represented by top specialists and continues to reflect and express current thinking and the state of the art in nature conservation in urban areas. Annual review of the membership structure by the membership committee.
Topic	Project	Leader	Targets

Forum Projects (new and current work)

Topic	Project	Principal participants	Targets	Progress as at April 2010
Discover Yourself Outside	Forum publication highlighting the benefits in a time of climatic change in developing uninteresting and abandoned patches of land. Authors; Burls, Luscombe and Millward	Secretariat	To circulate this publication to all new UK MPs.	Circulated to all sitting Westminster MPs, members of the Welsh Assembly and members of the Scottish Parliament pre the 2010 general election.
Greenspace Toolbox	To create a "Toolbox" to filled 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	Pete Frost, Ambra Burls, Graham Leekes and Nigel Lawson	To identify the gaps in the provision of toolkits and to identify where the provision of toolkits is both possible and desirable.	The sub-group held a meeting in Crewe on October 20 th 2009 to review the Forum's approach and to identify topic areas. In February 2010 PF and AB drafted an outline of the Pre-Assessment System to help potential users justify the time and expense involved in using Toolkits from the Toolbox. 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.
Logging system (Forum archives)	To "sort out" the Forum's archives	Alison Millward and Secretariat	To produce archives of the Forum's activities and funding and to create a library of publications by Forum members	Papers lodged with Susan Davies at University of Aberystwyth. Agreement to provide an honorarium of £300 to students involved in the project. Forum members will be invited in May 2010 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.

Handbook of Urban Ecology	Contribution of chapters by people within the Forum	Ian Douglas and David Goode	To contribute towards a new monograph of urban ecology. Cultural and ethical connections with ecology emphasised.	35 chapters have been completed; 10 chapters are in the editorial process and completion of 8 chapters is still awaited. Final publication is planned for around October 2010. The final version will have circa 53 chapters, be around 600 pages long, will be comprehensive and without any apparent gaps.
Post URGENT Meeting	To stimulate connections between outcomes of the URGENT programme and urban-rural ecosystem services.	Graham Leekes	GLE has material on ecological findings from the URGENT programme and there is synergy with UNESCO's Biosphere Research programme.	
Do Street trees Have a Future? (Street Trees and Sustainability)	One day conference to be held May 12 th 2010 at University College London (UCL).	Gerald Dawe, Ambra Burls, David Goode and Secretariat	Publicise research work on Street Trees and Sustainability. The aim of the conference is to change how urban trees are managed and to influence policy and practice.	DG has obtained preferential room rates at UCL. GD and AB have organised recognised speakers. Many members are involved in publicising the event.
Training Sessions for RTPi	To undertake a training session for RTPi to raise awareness of green infrastructure in respect of adaptation strategies to climate change.	Alison Millward, Ambra Burls and Joanne Tippet	For RTPi to raise awareness of green infrastructure in respect of adaptation strategies to climate change	AM/AB are devising an appropriate training module. JT agreed to provide input into this process.
Shanghai World Expo 2010	The Shanghai World Expo May 1 st to October 31 st 2010. The theme is "Better City, Better Life"	Pete Frost and Ian Douglas	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.	ID will be visiting China mid August 2010 and has agreed, if appropriate, to represent the Forum
MAB Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence	Awarding suitable sites/projects.	Members	To complete the assessments of nominated sites.	Assessment of the applications by <i>Roots and Shoots</i> and <i>Buglife</i> is ongoing. Following a proposal for <i>Lower Thames Estuary</i> to aim for Biosphere Reserve status, it is also being investigated.
Topic	Project	Principal participants	Targets	Progress as at September 2009