

UK Urban Ecology Forum

Minutes of the meeting held at University of Manchester Tuesday May 22nd 2018

Present

Dave Barlow (DB)	Manchester City Council
Mark Champion (MC)	Lancashire Wildlife Trust
Ian Douglas (ID)	University of Manchester
Paul Evans (PE)	Writer and Broadcaster
Pete Frost (PF)	Natural Resources Wales
Nick Grayson (NG)	Birmingham City Council
David Haley (DH)	Manchester Metropolitan University
Jane Houghton (JH)	Natural England
Philip James (PJ)	University of Salford
Nigel Lawson (NL) (Hon. Sec.)	University of Manchester
Sarah Lindley (SL)	University of Manchester
Kerry Morrison (KM)	Artist and Ecologist
Richard Scott (RS) (Chair)	Eden Project
Joanne Tippett (JT)	University of Manchester

George Barker

George Barker, the founder of UK MAB Urban Forum, died on May 1st 2018. The meeting opened with a tribute to him by ID and a one minute silence. David Goode has written a tribute to George in The Nature of Cities which can be found at:

<https://www.thenatureofcities.com/2018/05/22/george-barker-1940-2018-tribute/>

Many member of the group owe career paths and fresh insight in their work through George's enthusiasm and actions. Ian Douglas read out a citation of George's work for Urban Wildlife and the evolution of the UK Urban Forum.

New Member Mark champion was welcomed to the group.

Apologies

John Box, David Goode, John Handley, David Knight, Judy Ling-Wong, Alison Millward, Paul Nolan, Julie Proctor, Joe Ravetz, Terry Robinson, Alan Scott, Peter Shirley,

Minutes of meeting held November 23rd 2017

The minutes were accepted

Actions from meeting held November 23rd 2017

- *Natural Greenspace Standards (JB)*

- Carried forward
- **Natural Capital Committee (RS, JB and JH)**
JH drew attention to the Defra and Office of National Statistics' UK Urban Natural Capital Account <https://www.eftec.co.uk/project/%20%09accounting-uk-urban-natural-capital-account>
- **Case studies of good practice- disseminating a positive agenda (JLW, TR and PS)**
Carried forward
- **Awards (PS and JB), New Members (All) and Web site (All and NL)**
Agenda items covered below

Link to UN-Habitat Urban Agenda

RS attended the UN-Habitat World Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur in February 2018 on behalf of The Eden Project. He had fruitful discussions with the External Relations Division about the UK Urban Ecology Forum joining the UN-Habitat network and becoming accredited to UN-Habitat.

The meeting welcomed RS's initiative and the possibility of renewing a link to the UN taking the Forum from local to global. DH felt that the Forum's connection to UN-Habitat would be mutually beneficial.

RS believes that the Forum meets the criteria required and it was agreed that the Forum make an official application to join in advance of the next session of UN-Habitat Governing Council in April 2019 who approve organisations seeking accreditation.

It was agreed to take this forward with all speed. RS has been advised that the application will require a list of all members of the Forum, including their postal address.

Action:

- **RS to make the application for the Forum to be accredited to UN-Habitat.**
 - **All members to provide NL with their postal address to accompany the application.**
- This action is urgent.**

Presentations:

1. Greater Manchester Urban Pioneer (Jane Houghton)

The Pioneers are action learning pilots in support of Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan. Defra have asked the Pioneers to explore, test and trial four aspects of the plan –the 'asks':

- Testing new tools and methods as part of applying a natural capital approach in practice
- Demonstrate a joined-up integrated approach to delivery
- Pioneer and 'scale-up' the use of new funding opportunities
- Grow our understanding of 'what works', sharing lessons and best practice.

JH presented an update on Defra's

Greater Manchester Urban Pioneer The Greater Manchester Urban Pioneer (2017 – 2020) which will feed into Greater Manchester's Spatial Framework. It explores the links between environment, society and economy, focusing on improving the natural environment through improved decision making to support the health, wellbeing and prosperity of Greater Manchester's residents. Natural England has helped to examine deficiencies in access to greenspaces and to nature, emphasising the need for a systems approach to the benefits of access to nature and outdoor recreation.

Data were presented on demographic patterns of access to, and use of, greenspace, accessible greenspace being defined as that which available to the general public, with free entry and no time restrictions on access. The mapping used can found at: <https://mappinggm.org.uk/gmodin>. Discussion focused on the lack of robust spatial data on accessible natural greenspaces and the need for the project to be evidence based. It was felt that relying on current mapping of urban greenspaces did not provide sufficiently informative data and that 'on the ground' verification in consultation with local agencies and communities required. The feeling is that now that we need to defend urban greenspace it is imperative that it is accurately mapped and described. A key issue discussed was the mapping of both the spaces and the access points to them: proximity in terms of a linear distance is not the same as the distance that has to be walked to an access point. Forum members emphasised the importance of starting the conversation: identifying the spaces that local people value, as in the Hulme study in the City of Manchester. Members present all expressed concern about the understating of the financial needs of urban parks in the official figures supplied to central Government.

DB drew attention to one of the Urban Pioneer's demonstrator and support projects and initiatives, Natural Course. Natural Course is an EU LIFE Integrated Project aimed at delivering the objectives of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) across the North West England River Basin District, with an early focus on the River Irwell catchment. Natural Course is delivered by a partnership comprising the Environment Agency, United Utilities, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (with Salford City Council acting as lead authority), the Rivers Trust and Natural England. The project partners work together to deliver integrated water management approaches to tackle the challenges of the WFD and enhanced flood risk management. *The Irwell Management Catchment: Natural Capital Account and Ecosystem Services Opportunities Mapping* is available at:

<http://naturalcourse.co.uk/uploads/2018/04/Executive-Summary-TEP-ref.-P6635.007-002.pdf>

Actions:

JH to provide NL with presentations for the Forum's web site.

2. Delivering Defra's 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (Nick Grayson)

NG presented Birmingham City Council's Livable Cities Programme providing a systems change for delivery of Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan see: <http://liveablecities.org.uk>.

Most people and decision makers still accept the industrial, nineteenth century model of the benefits of urban parks in terms the health and welfare of the working population. Nowadays, urban areas have to be managed in global, regional and local contexts by changing patterns of park governance and recasting service delivery models. A step change in how urban greenspace is dealt with would help to fit parks into the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment principles and the valuation of Natural Capital. The liveable cities approach to urban ecosystem services is available in a booklet downloadable from:

http://liveablecities.org.uk/sites/default/files/outcome_downloads/littlebookofecosystemservicesinthecity.pdf

Discussion on both presentations centred on how the Forum might best feed into these programmes. It was felt that this would best be achieved in the immediate future by the Forum outlining some 20 themes and principals of good practice relating to urban greenspaces in order to inform the future agenda and the promotion of urban nature and the protection of natural resources.

RS mentioned previous work on mental maps by individuals like Jacqui Burgess at UCL in the mid 80.s and the possibility of an overlap of some kind to reflect real life use by communities in annotating real life and given a different perspective to digital only accessibility data. KM/ PE/DH and others recognised the disconnect between digital data, to personal experience and the way people might connect to a landscape, in routes particularly river banks for example.

5 ways to Wellbeing was advocated in 2010 onwards, for health messaging. It was proposed that the Forum as a group could assist projects like Urban Pioneer with a code of our one based on the experience of the group. A 10 -20 point code in the form of a charter could be started and passed around like a chain letter. This is something we could start rolling and achieve by the end of June if passed round quickly. RS proposed doing this - a first starter is attached. Please add your own thoughts to it and send to NL.

Action:

All members to add to PS's draft Charter for Urban Ecology and send to NL by end June 2018

It was stressed that one or more members of the Forum should take ownership of Forum projects to 'champion' them and to lead on outputs by the Forum.

It was agreed to form a working group on examples of Good Practices in the provision of urban greenspaces and the protection of nature in urban environments to report to Defra (via JH) by end June 2018. The working group, which welcomes inputs and suggestions from all Forum members, comprises JH, NG, DH, JLW and RS.

Action:

Working group to consult with all members and to provide a report on Good Practices by end June 2018 (JH, NG, DH and RS).

Awards

It was felt that the examples of Good Practices in the provision of urban greenspaces and the protection of nature in urban environments which the Forum will be providing in relationship to Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan could also inform on revised criteria for the Forum's awards.

NG confirmed that Birmingham City Council had received a certificate relating to the award to Birmingham Natural Capital Tool (NG will liaise with JB).

Action:

Good Practices working group to also liaise with JB and PS re the Awards process.

Membership

RS welcomed new members Dave Barlow (Manchester City Council) and Mark Champion (Lancashire Wildlife Trust) to the Forum.

The need to attract active younger new members was again discussed.

Action:

All members to recommend new members of UK Urban Forum to RS

Web site

NL reported that he had been informed by Graham Bowden (Cartographer at University of Manchester who worked on the current site some 15 odd years ago and who assists on inputting into the site) that the site is no longer fit for purpose and should be updated to one with a new hosting package where we are in charge of the domain name, thereby avoiding have to access the site via the now inappropriate "UK MAB Urban Forum" name. A new site would be more dynamic; make links simpler and more accessible; would be compatible with smart phones; and could include a chat room if this was felt to be useful. The initial coast of setting up the new package would be about £300 in the first year and £40 to 60 per annum for maintenance, plus labour.

Agreed:

- To accept in principal Graham Bowden's proposal for a new web site.
- Graham to provide a written outline of proposal including fully estimated costings.
- If possible for the site to include software to allow it to be used as an archive.
- Not to include a chat room facility for the time being.
- NL to ask Terry Robinson to review the proposal and advise.
- NL/Graham Bowden to liaise with MC and JT re site details

Action:

NL to take this forward

Treasurer's report and appointment of new treasurer

PS had prior to the meeting informed the Group of his desire, due to his wife's health problems, to relinquish his duties as Honorary Treasurer. This was accepted with regret and RS on his own behalf and on that of the Group expressed thanks to PS for his work for many years and his expression of best wishes for his wife's well-being. PS also made it known that whilst he wished to step down as Treasurer he wants to remain involved with the Urban Forum and this was welcomed by RS and the Group.

PS submitted a financial statement for the period 22/05/2017 to 21/05/2018 in advance of the meeting showing:

- Opening Balance	£ 4554.93
- Income	£ 84.05
- Expenditure	£ 9 25.35
- Closing Balance	£ 3703.63

NL had previously managed the finances and it was agreed that NL and RS would take on the role of Hon Treasurer for the time being and that NL should liaise with PS accordingly. NL has arranged to meet with PS on June 12th to facilitate the change-over.

Action:

NL to meet with PS and facilitate the change-over as treasurer.

Any other business

- **Routledge Handbook on Urban Ecology (Second edition)**
ID distributed a synopsis for the second edition of the Handbook of Urban Ecology, a project of the UK Urban Ecology Forum. He pointed out the truly international content of this second edition which is co-edited by Pippin Anderson (South Africa), Ian Douglas (UK), David Goode (UK), Mike Houck (USA), David Maddox (USA), Harini Nagendra (India) and Tan Puay Yok (Singapore) and so far includes contributions by over 100 authors from 30 different countries.

- **Shore Findings: Coastal Towns and Coastal Paths**
JH informed the Group on Natural England's involvement with the Outdoor Recreation Network on access and governance issues appertaining to coastal paths in coastal towns. She, on behalf of NE, will be seeking input from the Group.
Action:
JH to take this forward

- **Cockermouth Arts Project**
DH passed round details of his Cockermouth Arts Project

- **National Wildflower Centre**
RS announced the re-launch of the National Wildflower Centre with the Eden Project at events in Liverpool and Cornwall, thus carrying forward the long legacy of Landlife.

Date of next meeting(s)

NL had received feedback on the desire of Members to be able to plan well in advance for meetings of the Forum.

It was decided to poll members on their preference for dates for future meetings and the following are proposed:

- Meeting 1 early September 2018 (venue to be confirmed but likely to be held in London) on either September 3, 4, 5 or 11
- Meeting 2 (venue to be decided) early December 2018 on either December 4,5,11 or 12
- Meeting 3 (venue to be decided) early March 2019 on either March 12, 13, 19 or 20.

All members are request to inform NL of their preferred dates as soon as possible. The date receiving the most responses prior to the cut-off date will be chosen.

Action:

All Members to provide NL with their preferred date for the September 2018 meeting, and preferably for all these meetings, by July 13th 2018