

UK Urban Ecology Forum (UKUEF)
Minutes of the teleconference meeting held on
Tuesday January 14th at 1.00pm

Participating

John Box (JB)	Unaffiliated
Pete Frost (PF)	Natural Resources Wales
David Haley (DH)	Artist and Educator
John Handley (JHan)	University of Manchester
Jane Houghton (JHou)	Natural England
Nigel Lawson (NL) (Hon. Sec.)	University of Manchester
Kerry Morrison (KM)	Artist and Ecologist
Terry Robinson (TM)	Chair Outdoor Recreation Network
Elizabeth Rollinson (ER)	Linnean Society
Richard Scott (RS) (Chair)	National Wildflower Centre/Eden Project
Danielle Sinnett (DS)	University of West of England
Joanne Tippett (JT)	University of Manchester
Tim Webb (TW)	RSPB
Phil Wheeler (PW)	Manchester Metropolitan University
Niall Williams (NW)	Landscape artist and urban designer
Judy Ling Wong (JLW)	Black Environment Network

Apologies

Ambra Burls, Blanche Cameron, Ian Douglas, David Goode, Nick Grayson, Sarah Lindley, John Little, Alison Millward, Julie Proctor.

Minutes of the meeting held December 4th 2019

JHan pointed out that under the item “Urban Ecology Manifesto/Charter/Principles/Name” the development of a single document covering the Forum’s constitution or statement of intent by merging David Goode’s (DG) Philosophy and practice of Urban Ecology with DH and others Manifesto document to from a single document had not been agreed upon. NL undertook to alter the draft minutes to reflect this. The minutes were thereafter accepted.

Philosophy and practice of Urban Ecology

JHan suggested that DG’s Philosophy and practice of Urban Ecology should be placed on the Forum’s web site, not least because it provides an excellent answer to the question 'What is Urban Ecology?'. NL undertook to ask DG for his agreement and subsequent to the meeting DG has agreed to do this following his early inclusion of some references.

Agreed JLW and DH to produce a one-page ‘Statement of Intent’ on the Forum’s thinking and that all three documents, e.g. the Urban Ecology Manifesto/Charter/Principles/Name; DG’s Philosophy document and the proposed Statement of Intent to be revised and recirculated.

Actions:

- **JLW and JB to produce and circulate a one-page ‘Statement of Intent’.**

- **DH, JLW, JB and RS to revise and recirculate the Urban Ecology Manifesto/Charter/Principles/Name document.**
- **DG to provide an updated version of his philosophy of urban ecology document for the Forum's web site.**

WUF10 participation

JLW confirmed that both she (from her friend Miss Shaikha Mar lam Alqassimi) and RS (from the Eden Project) had received funding to enable them to attend UN-Habitat's 10th World Urban Forum 8-13 February in Abu Dhabi, UAE. She also reported that she was working with PF and others on examples of good practice to present at the networking event on Capacity Building and Best Practice which UKUEF will be running at WUF10 in conjunction with the Urban Research Center, University of Pennsylvania whose Eugenie Birch is also a member of the Global Stakeholders Forum Advisory Group. She also reported that we are engaging with Siraj Sait, Chair of Global Stakeholders Forum, who is fully supporting what we are doing.

JHou reported that an application had been made to Natural England (NE) for funding for two additional attendees and that NE is keen to have a dialogue with the Forum on how it might contribute to NE's agenda in the future and be further funded by NE. (Subsequent to the meeting JHou has confirmed that NE has approved a grant of £2,000 to the Forum towards the costs of the presentation of the seminar at WUF10 and writing of the report to disseminate the discussion and conclusions).

NW reported that he still hopes to obtain some funding from the Landscape Institute to enable him to also attend WUF10 and to also investigate how the Forum can contribute to the Landscape Institute.

Work Programme

NL updated the meeting on the development of the Forum's work programme which has the broad objective to produce guidance documents on various topics relevant to urban ecology in the UK. These documents could also complement the development of a methodology on setting up urban ecology forums for UN-Habitat, and elsewhere as well as being of value to urban ecology in general and to potential future funders. To date 13 themes/topics and members prepared to play a leading role and to contribute to them have been identified. All members who have not already done so are urged to become involved in one or more of the topics as well as proposing and championing additional topics. RS commented that an important element of the work programme is to encourage all members to link together.

NL also explained the need to further develop the universal template emphasising local and stakeholder participation and that Sarah Lindley had agreed to assist him with this.

DH also emphasised the need for more structure and better guidelines, the need to specify activities and outputs and for a timetable and deadlines for deliverables to ensure that action is taken.

The latest version of the programme is attached hereto as Appendix1.

Agreed to accept the work programme in principle and for DH, RS, SL and NL to work on development of the template and to propose a timetable with initial responses by end April 2020.

Actions:

- **DH, RS, SL and NL to further develop the universal template by end March 2020 and to prepare a timetable for deliverables by end April 2020.**

- **All members to become actively involved in the development and the delivery of the work programme.**

Treasurer's report and financial planning

NL reported that current bank balance is £1526. Income is nil. Members travel costs unrecoverable elsewhere to meetings in London is typically £500.

JLW informed that she will seek to hold another Art of Nature network event to raise money for the Forum.

Action:

- **JLW to investigate and initiate the holding of an Arts event.**

Draft proposal for balancing the membership of the Forum

JB outlined his proposals for balancing the membership of the Forum. He pointed out that the Forum currently has 37 members, 13 women and 24 men of which 2 are in Wales, 2 in Scotland and none in Northern Ireland and that as a UK body membership should be drawn from all four UK countries. Further as a member of UN Habitat Global Stakeholders Forum and as a model for other Forums requires us to have a balanced membership in terms of gender and BAME. He made three proposals:

Proposal A: In considering new members the Forum should seek to address the imbalances outlined.

Proposal B: The criteria for membership is currently only about the process of becoming a member and should be amended to reflect endeavours to widen diversity.

Proposal C: set targets to redress imbalances by 2025. These targets to be monitored and regularly reviewed.

JB's draft proposals in full are attached as Appendix 2.

JT proposed that members should have an active role in practice in urban ecology in the UK and be willing to play a role in advancing the frontiers of understanding and practice through the Forum. They should also bring a wide range of experience, with experienced practitioners working together with those earlier in their careers.

Agreed to accept all three of JB's proposals subject to inclusion of JT's comments.

Actions:

- **NL and JB to amend the web site to reflect the new criteria**
- **NL and JB to monitor progress**
- **All members to seek applicants for membership to reflect the revised criteria**

Future meetings

JB proposed that video conferencing should become the Forum's preferred method for Forum meetings to ensure wide participation, a reduced carbon footprint and reduce expenditure. Further this would assist recruitment of members from Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. Attendance at these meetings could be in clusters in regional hubs.

JHou reported that NE could host such a cluster in London as well as at some of NE's regional offices such as for example in Preston in the North West.

PF drew attention to possible problems in using corporate equipment.

JT supported the need for video conferencing but also pointed out the importance of occasional face to face meetings in building connections amongst members and particularly as new members join the Forum.

Agreed to explore how best to use video conferencing for future meetings whilst also holding at least one face to face meeting annually.

Actions:

- **JT and NL to investigate facilities at University of Manchester**
- **JHou, NW and RS to explore the availability of regional hubs**
- **All to explore how to make this happen**

General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

JB had previously raised concerns about the Forum's responsibilities for GDPR.

Sarah Lindley (SL) provided an outline from her previous experience in meeting GDPR and NL circulated members on 28th November 2019 with details of how UKUEF handles their data.

Action:

- **RS and SL to produce a short statement to be put on the Forum's web site.**

Web site

NL reminded the meeting that Graham Bowden who looks after the site for us had proposed a move to a new hosting company on a Linux server with a content management system (CMS) like WordPress or Joomla! and that he could organise this for us for £300 (see minutes of meeting held on 11th September 2019). NL felt that this would be advantageous but that a decision should be delayed until the Forum's financial situation was stabilised.

TR and JLW suggested that updating the web site might be a suitable student project and that other systems such as WordPress might be preferable.

Action:

- **TR and JLW to provide details of alternative solutions before the next meeting.**

Any other business

1. Secretariat

NL informed the meeting that whilst currently in excellent health he was concerned that his advancing age along with the commencement of both hearing and note-taking difficulties meant that the Forum should commence planning now for the longer term continuation of the secretariat. Meanwhile he is very happy to continue to assist RS in general and the Forum in particular in whatever capacity this might be for as long as he is able.

Action:

- **To plan for the longer term running of the secretariat**

2. UN-Habitat Assembly GSF and Routledge Handbook launch event

ER re-confirmed the Linnean Society's willingness to host this event and confirmed that Tuesday 17th November and Thursday 19th November are still available, with the Thursday the preferred date for the UKUEF event. ER has subsequent to the meeting confirmed that she will run this past the Society's Programmes Committee. For example: where/how do we want to do the launch of the UKUEF – is that actually intended to be the 'main event' in the meeting room, with the book as a 'side-event in the library after the lecture? Would we envisage a formal lecture (on UKUEF and/or the book) in the meeting room and then a wine reception in the library with book signing, or just informal speech/es in the library over a

glass of wine, with book signing? It would be helpful to have a few lines on the title/content of book if possible, and who would be speaking. The Society likes to 'badge' its events – this could be a 'Nature Reader' (i.e. LSL-speak for book launch) or a 'Special Event'. We also need to think about the 'on-costs' for this (staff overtime, refreshments/wine). The timing of the event will determine the on-costs: typically for an evening event, they serve tea/cake in the library 5.30-6pm, lecture 6-7pm, reception in library 7-8pm. This would incur £300 overtime costs (nominally 3h); tea is £1.50pp and wine is £8/bottle. If the event is held earlier, then overtime costs go down. The Programmes Committee will have some budget available but it would be good to know what we are asking for, so that ER can advise soonest whether there will be any costs to absorb. It is her hope that we can run this as a joint event with the Linnean Society, sharing costs accordingly. (see minutes of meeting held September 11th 2019 for further details)

In discussion it was felt that very early confirmation was now a necessity, not least in obtaining the agreement of key speakers such as, for example and hopefully, Tony Juniper Chair of NE. Actions include those carried forward from the meeting held September 11th 2019.

Actions:

- **RS or NL to advise ER regarding the Forum's plans for this event as soon as possible.**
- **JHou to confirm the availability of Tony Juniper to attend on either of these dates**
- **Ian Douglas (ID) to contact Routledge re launch of the Urban Ecology Handbook**
- **All members to give consideration to the above and feed detailed ideas and proposals to RS and NL for discussion at the next and future meetings.**

3. Charity status

RS circulated a briefing note on the status of UKUEF with reference to a possible transfer from unincorporated to charitable status (see also minutes of meeting held December 4th 2019). His briefing note is attached hereto as Appendix 3.

Action:

- **All members to comment in advance of a vote on the subject. Please send comments to RS and NL in advance of the next meeting.**

Date of next meeting

Wednesday April 8th 2020 at 1.00pm by video link in clusters.

Action:

- **JHou to confirm details of NE hubs able to provide video conferencing facilities on April 4th 2020**

Appendices

1. Work Programme as at January 14th 2020

Broad Objective: to produce guidance documents on various topics relevant to urban ecology in the UK. These documents could also complement the development of a methodology on setting up urban ecology forums for UN-Habitat, and elsewhere.

Themes/Topics so-far identified: (Champions so far identified are underlined)

- *Air quality management* (Nick Grayson, Sarah Lindley)
- *Ecopedagogy and capable futures.* (David Haley, Blanche Cameron)
- *Engagement and communication - active involvement and inspiring change with stakeholders and the general public.* (Paul Evans, Kerry Morrison, Joanne Tippett, Judy Ling Wong, Tim Webb)
- *Green Infrastructure Standards / GI evaluation including interaction with governing bodies.* (Pete Frost, Jane Haughton, Alison Millward, Danielle Sinnett)
- *Ground Source Heat Pumps as a form of urban energy generation.* (Tim Webb)
- *Local urban food production* (David Haley, Victoria Sherwin, Vincent Walsh)
- *Mitigation of climate change impacts in urban environments and adaptation to climate change in urban environments.* (John Box, David Goode, John Handley, Sarah Lindley,)
- *Public Health* (Danielle Sinnett, Phil Wheater)
- *The role of the arts and cultural dimensions of public engagement* (Judy Ling Wong, Kerry Morrison, Tim Webb)
- *Urban biodiversity* (David Goode, Phil Wheater)
- *Urban greening, including urban forestry, trees, parks, green spaces etc.* (Dave Barlow, Richard Scott, Danielle Sinnett, Phil Wheater, Tim Webb)
- *Urban soils and substrates* (John Handley, John Little, Richard Scott)
- *Waste and litter management including recycling and land regeneration* (Nigel Lawson, Richard Scott, Danielle Sinnett)
- *Water management including water quality, supply and flood control etc.* (Ian Douglas, David Haley, Tim Webb)

Development of a universal template

The emphasis is on local and stakeholder participation.

Each theme should seek to provide guidance on

- Expertise required
- Data required and data collection
- How to intervene
- Examples of good practice
- Further reading
- Etc. (this section still needs further development)

Comments

- Many themes/topics cross- cut with all or many others.
- This is a living and evolving programme

2. John Box's draft proposals for balancing the membership of the Forum

Background

- Currently we have 39 members – 13 women and 26 men. [David Knight and Graham Leeks have resigned; we have lost touch with Chris Nevin; we admitted eight new

members in September comprising 3 women and 5 men who are all from England with the majority based in London and the Southeast]

- In Wales, we have Pete Frost and Ambra Burls who wants to stay as a corresponding member
- In Scotland, we have Julie Procter and Kerry Morrison
- We have no members in Northern Ireland
- I do not know how many of our members are BAME and this information would be useful to obtain

Rationale for a balanced membership of a UK body with an international profile

- We are a UK body and our membership needs to be drawn from all four countries of the United Kingdom
- Our international profile as a member of the Global Stakeholders Forum of UN Habitat and as a model for other urban Forums requires us to have a balanced membership in terms of gender and in terms of BAME

Proposals for the membership of the UK Urban Ecology Forum

Proposal A

In considering new members, the Forum will:

- Keep in mind the need for young people early in their careers as well as those who are experienced
- Seek parity of women and men [currently the ratio is 13 women to 26 men which is 1 to 2]
- Seek good representation of BAME members
- Have members based in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland that comprise ten per cent of the total membership for each of these three geographical areas because the Forum is a UK body that is a member of the Global Stakeholder Forum of UN Habitat
- Seek fair representation from all Regions in England

Proposal B

The existing text 'Criteria for Membership' on the About Us/Members page on our website is in fact about the process of becoming a member not about the criteria for membership. My proposal is that the text above which sets broad criteria for membership of the Forum, subject to amendments by the Forum, replaces all of the existing text on the website under 'Criteria for Membership' and includes a request that prospective members contact Richard Scott.

Proposal C

The Chair and Honorary Secretary will monitor the following targets which will be reviewed at every meeting of the Forum:

- Ten per cent of the total membership should be members based in each of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland by 2025
- Achieve female/male parity by 2025
- Encourage new BAME members
- Encourage new members outside London and the Southeast

Practical implications of proposals

The practical implications of my proposals for gender parity and representation from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are that new members in the short-term should primarily be women who are not based in England. I am absolutely convinced we must do this.

There is a very strong need for video teleconferencing to be available at all meetings of the Forum - or for videoconferencing to be the preferred method for Forum meetings to ensure that the Forum has a minimal carbon footprint. Video teleconferencing would ensure the widest possible participation of all our members in Forum meetings and this would assist our recruitment of new members from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and not from England to ensure that the Forum is a truly UK body.

3. UK Urban Ecology Forum. Charity status. Draft Working Document. From Richard Scott (Chair) for discussion January 14th 2020.

Context. Where We are Now.

These notes form text from Judy Ling Wong, and myself (Richard Scott) and comments from Kerry Morrison, and others in evolving the Urban Ecology Forum, particularly with view to charitable status.

Given the evolution of the Forum this circulation is to inform discussion on our current and future status, and as information for a suggested future ballot of members, to ensure our complete agreement and comfort in any change. In the immediate instance we can remain as we are, given we rest below £5,000 income (the minimum sum needed for charity registration). We have historically operated as an informal network, of invited individuals, including representatives from Statutory organisations, which in the past has enabled financial support from statutory agencies like English Nature/Natural England and CCW/Natural Resources Wales in the past, and indeed passed legacies from the old Urban Wildlife Network, and of course the good nature of its members and organisations. For example carrying insurance at events.

Where We Might Be.

The important point right now is to consider our future sustainability. Moving towards charitable status may help this. However, there are of course obligations attached to adopting charitable status, and we need confidence in where we stand, in making an informed choice, whether we retain as we are or change. So we need to be and aware of the issues involved, and the combined need to pull in the skills of our membership with a new strength of purpose for growing influence of past achievements and - most evident in the Routledge Textbook of Urban Ecology, and links to practical people focused project work nationwide, and future as yet to be defined opportunities.

The joy of the membership of the Urban Ecology Forum is its flexibility and variety. For this reason it is important we are clear about our next steps, to achieve consistency in our long term aims, and present fresh energy for our new members. This makes the best opportunity and the importance of urban ecology right now, while retaining these benefits we already have in the best way possible.

Concerns have been expressed about rigidity of more formal structures, and worry of potential steerage by a smaller number of trustees, or executive board members, from a minority interest- it has happened to some smaller charities (and to some Forum members). Alternatives would be to register as incorporated company or a cooperative (There may be some models), which is becoming another recognised option which may be a

future option, as a venture intellectual capital as it were. owned by its members. Charities are not restricted from using the words “co-operative” or “co-op” in their name but a charity’s name should accurately reflect its charitable purpose.

An incorporated organisation has “legal personality” which means it can enter into contracts, buy or lease property, and employ people in its own right. Any debts or obligations belong to the organisation, rather than to the individuals running it. This gives the trustees, directors or committee members some protection, although they still have liability for debts caused by negligence or poor financial management.

An unincorporated organisation is, in legal terms, a collection of individuals. Any debts or obligations are the responsibility of the trustees or management committee themselves. Although this might sound scary, many small organisations actually have very few financial obligations. For example, most community groups do not employ staff or run premises, and there is little money involved in running the group’s activities. This means the risk is often very low.

Organisations with incorporated legal structures are more closely regulated than those with unincorporated structures. They take longer to set up, require more ongoing work to keep running, and are more likely to incur costs for services from accountants and solicitors.

Compared to a standard company registration for limiting liability, a CIC specifically provides several advantages:

- 1 A clear commitment to social goals. ...
- 2 Access to certain forms of finance. ...
- 3 Limited liability and protection. ...
- 4 Familiarity. ...
- 5 Flexibility of limited company structure. ...
- 6 Continuity of purpose. ...
- 7 Quicker to set up, just requires a bank account (no fixed amount from recent experience from Liverpool) - Can be set up in a very short space of time, but requires small group of Directors in the same way Charity requires Trustees.

Other key points:

Currently. We do not have a full constitution, this we are moving closer too, the definition and work in recent times has moved this distinction forwards, and refined purpose reflecting both our legacy and aspiration, particularly perhaps in developing our relationship in our connection with the UNHABITAT for example, which has stimulated this debate.

Operating as an open network, has advantages, but this could make it more difficult to present to anyone like a charitable trust who may want to give us money and be interested in our objectives.

The work in refining our philosophy in its different strands a manifesto is therefore hugely important as we build this together. We have been in this status for a long time, behaving as an open network, with the benefit of looking to partner organisations to take on cover the

insurance liability and role of organising events, similar organisations like the UK Grasslands Forum has operated in this way.

Benefits of being a charity:

For a charity there are a specified number of objects (purposes) that are considered charitable by law and to set up a charity you must choose one or more of these or a purpose that is very similar to these otherwise your application will be rejected. To be charitable the objects must have a public benefit which is much more specific and defined in law compared to the community benefit a CIC is required to fulfil.

A charity may own a CIC, in which case the CIC would be permitted to pass assets to the charity. CICs are more lightly regulated than charities but do not have the benefit of charitable status (or responsibilities placed on Trustees), even if their objects are entirely charitable in nature. ... CICs are specifically identified with social enterprise. Some charitable Trusts may not give to CIC, this may be rare but it has been reported.

Establishing the forum as a community Interest company. CIC

As a Forum establishing were close to this once before, but held off, in part because of the need to resolve our relationship with the UNESCO. A CIC will typically not be dependent on donations and fundraising as it will have a mix of income including contracts, trading income and grants. Whereas a charity is more likely to be dependent on grants, donations and fundraising for a larger proportion of its income. This means charities tend to deliver time limited projects that are funded by trusts and foundations, whereas CICs will have products and services they trade continuously regardless of the funding or grants they receive. There are exceptions to this and many CICs are entirely dependent on grants and deliver projects – but this means they lack sustainability as they have no regular income of their own. There are also many charities that are largely dependent on contracts for income rather than fundraising and grants.

A CIC must specify a community it will benefit. This can be a group of people/things, a geographical area, people with certain characteristics such as young people, female led businesses in the UK, areas of deforestation around the world etc. Depending on the community benefit specified by the CIC it may also be charitable but it does not have to be. The CIC Regulator will generally accept any community benefit and these are not defined in law.

Charitable status has the following advantages.

- 1 A clear commitment to social goals. ...
- 2 Access to certain forms of finance. ...
- 3 Limited liability and protection. ...
- 4 Familiarity. ...
- 5 Flexibility of limited company structure. ...
- 6 Continuity of purpose. ...
- 7 Quicker to set up, just requires a bank account (no fixed amount from recent experience from Liverpool) - Can be set up in a very short space of time, but requires small group of Directors in the same way Charity requires Trustees.

Options for discussion/consideration

Three suggestions have been muted and laid out (Judy Ling Wong)

1. Remain as we are, do nothing and just remain as a network of people coming together as a forum. As the network we are. As a loose organisation. No constitution, but a memorandum of articles. This means being reliant on the resources of members generosity and organisations, for offer of events and which may be difficult given resources. We are currently in the updated our purpose and refined some of these thought with strong contributions from our legacy of key key members

2. Becoming a small charity can be a stepping stone to a temporary better funding position, envisaged as a step towards full registration with Charities Commission (the Charities regulator) with different choices from an incorporated Charity to a Foundation.

3. Become a

- A CIC/social enterprise regulated by the Office of Community Interest Companies/or
- A non-profit making Company regulated by no one

We can put this as a poll to our members, at a mutually agreed time based on information presented and cemented, but is important members are aware to the full context of this discussion and do not feel rushed, it is an important decision to make.

To fundraise it is agreed we need a work programme - an event and focus, report or focus for the group. Our reserves are currently very low. And as discussed with result in meeting energy for the group, this does require funding in terms where charitable/CIC status may help.

In addition to this, as a CIC or charity, we will need reserves that are not grant project money to run the organisation. We need reserves usually of 20% of turnover, for audit fees, for paying staff redundancy pay when they leave, nowadays there is also the contribution to a pension, etc. We will also need a travel budget. Even if all meetings are electronic, some key members will need to travel to conduct the business of the organisation, meet partners, influence at other meetings etc.

Judy has also cited the example of HMRC

Being a small charity with a HMRC number, opens us to for example, using Give as We Live, have a look: https://www.giveasyoulive.com/dashboard?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_content=ad1&utm_campaign=DecemberGAYLOnline&gclid=EA1aIQobChMIxoG1s4-i5gIVGLLtCh1iJwWSEAYASAAEgJN5vD_BwE

Each member could yield 50 pounds a year.. We can also crowdfund much more easily for specific things. At London National Park City, through supporters and their family and friends, when they crowdfund, they usually hit 30K to 40K a time easily.

Here is one suggested sequence of what could happen in the future, If we decide not to remain as we are .

1. Transition to a small charity to open up our funding position, carrying over the Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary (whoever they may be) as the minimum 3 trustees
2. Work on the content for the networking event proposed for WUF10 if successful. There is at present a core group for the WUF10 related work.
3. Go to WUF10. Identify international interest and UN support/partnership and other external support in what we wish to do , perhaps as a partnership model)
4. Clarify the work programme and substantiate it in terms of methodology and outcomes, potentially working with UN Habitat Global Stakeholders Forum through its Chair Siraj Sait who is London based and our Nairobi contacts
5. Identity who within the members will lead and deliver what we aspire to do in terms of producing guidance, with active working groups
6. Put together funding applications for core work and proposed initiatives as appropriate, working with others
7. Identify funders and supporter base
8. Achieve funding over 5K
9. If approved Take steps of registering as a Charity or CIC, or alternatively remain are covered by key member organisations.