



The UK Man and the Biosphere Committee Urban Forum

Draft minutes of the UK MAB Urban Forum meeting held 24th February 2014
Defra, Nobel House, Smith Square, London

1. Present

Ambra Burls	(AB)	Independent (Vice Chair)
Samantha Davenport	(SD)	Natural England
Peter Frost	(PF)	Natural Resources Wales
David Haley	(DH)	Manchester Metropolitan University
Graham Leeks	(GL)	Centre of Ecology & Hydrology
John Millar	(JM)	Independent
Alison Millward	(AM)	Independent Consultant (Chair)
Jane Houghton	(JH)	Natural England
Judy Ling Wong	(JLW)	Black Environment Network (Vice Chair)
Kerry Morrison	(KM)	University of Salford
Terry Robinson	(TR)	Independent Consultant
Alan Scott	(AS)	Independent Consultant
Richard Scott	(RS)	Landlife
Peter Shirley	(PS)	Independent

2. Apologies

John Box, Gerald Dawe, Peter Cush, Ian Douglas, Nick Grayson, Philip James, Nigel Lawson, Chris Nevin, Julie Procter, Joe Ravetz, Richard Sharland, Celia Spouncer, Joanne Tippett.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the last meeting 11th November 2013 were approved.

4. Matters Arising

A1 Communications Strategy

SD, AB, AM and JM met with Natural England's Communications Adviser Suzanne Alcorn to discuss best methods for communicating with Members of Parliament and use of social media in general. SD and AM were advised to set up a schedule of communications (who to communicate with who, when, how and about what using template to be supplied by NE); increasing activity on the web site, have a suite of feature articles to back up other types of communications, and think hard about our buzzwords. **A1**

A5 Greenspace Toolkits – NRW commission

PF thanked ID, NL, JP, AB and AM for their work on the rapid scoping exercise on toolkits for assessing ecosystem services from green infrastructure in urban areas. This has raised £1000 for the Forum. AM to send on a disc of key documents. **A2**

A2 Logo

AB will shortly receive the new logo vector from our engraver for wider circulation.

A3 Award Criteria

Thanks were given to AS, MF, JLW, PRS, AB one and all for completing the revision of the Award for Excellence criteria which have been placed on the web site.

A10 Removal of members from the list

TR commented that members of a 'Forum' should be expected to make some noise every so often. It was also acknowledged that the writing of books, nurturing babies and heavy work pressures can affect participation for long periods of time. So, in the interests of reducing unnecessary communications with less active members it was agreed that AM should give members who hadn't attended a meeting or participated in Forum activities in the previous 3 years, the opportunity to resign or be moved into a hibernation list. Such members would be most welcome to request being returned to the active list when circumstances allowed. The Forum would also want to be able to approach such members to tempt them out of hibernation when a need/opportunity for their participation arose. **A3**

5. Work Programme Reports

Art of Nature Events

The first Art of Nature event held in London on 22/23 February had proved a great success with 50 participants. The organisers saw the series of events as a creative process in itself, learning and developing along the way. Therefore they would like to vary the balance of time given to presentations, discussions and creative sessions for subsequent events, but were pleased with the overall format. JLW indicated that the feedback she had had was very positive with several participants asking how they might continue to be linked into the activities relating to the aims of The Art of Nature. KM suggested that all the organisers from the Forum may inform the process by doing a reflective piece on how they felt the event had gone. **A4**

Urban Biosphere Reserves

A decision on the Brighton, Hove Lewes & South Downs Biosphere Reserve is due in June 2014. AM and AB had provided a short piece on urban issues for Martin Price (Chair of UKMAB Committee) to take to UNESCO. The UK is the only nation with an Urban Forum and it is felt that we could make a contribution by highlighting the significance of its work at larger UNESCO gatherings such as EuroMAB. It was agreed that AB and AM would develop a programme of activity (and support Martin Price) to stimulate others in the MAB family of organisations to embrace urban areas into their thinking and Biosphere Reserves. Germany, Brazil and the IUCN were suggested by PF as key targets; TR suggested the areas active in the Purple Peri-Urban network. **A5**

Pro-environmental behaviours

A task and finish group is beginning to form around AB with JM, NG and Paul Nolan (new member) to begin work on a position paper.

CPD

Issues around the CPD for planners and community engagement are covered in section 9 below.

6. Financial Report

PS summarised the accounts up to the 22 February 2014 as:

Total expenditure	£1950.63
Total income	£8327.11
Balance	£6376.48

Further income of around £300 was expected (after costs) from the London Art of Nature event and £1000 for the greenspace toolkit commission before the end of the current financial year. The accounts appeared healthy but PS reminded us that travel costs to future meetings will be significant and that future Art of Nature events may not all make a profit such as the London event had.

Natural England had already provided a contribution to Forum funds of £500 for the 2013/14 financial year. JH and PF agreed to discuss with their sister agencies in Scotland and Northern Ireland the possibility of similar support. The agencies no longer give grants but can commission work from organisations like the Forum. **A5**

AM agreed to prepare the draft 2013/14 Annual Report and circulate as soon as possible. **A6**

7. Terms of Reference

AM introduced a draft Terms of Reference paper for discussion.

The Urban Forum is an unincorporated association – a group of people who have decided to cooperate to further the purpose that the association was formed to undertake. As such, any liability attaching to our activities and finances remains with the individual members. With a typical annual turnover of less than £5k the Charity Commission would be reluctant to register us as a charity, and the risks and liabilities associated with our activities have in any case always been small.

Recent reductions in the funding support from the agencies, reductions in institutional funding for the academics on the Forum to speak at conferences, the management of liabilities and risks arising from the public facing activities of the Forum such as the Art of Nature events and the need to acknowledge and ideally recompense the substantial gift of time given to the Forum's activities by some members on severely restricted incomes, had caused AM, PS and JLW to propose a review the finances of the Forum and the liabilities of its members.

The Black Environment Network had kindly agreed to provide public liability insurance cover for the London Art of Nature event, by partnering with us, which helped to reduce risks for members for this event. Such a partnership arrangement had been utilised in the past and could be again in the future.

Through discussion the meeting arrived at a view that it would be preferable for the Forum to assume a legal status that:

- limited the liabilities of individual members
- enabled it to apply for and raise funds from a wide range of sources
- enabled it to contract others for services rendered
- reduced its dependency on support from the agencies

- clearly defined the voluntary roles of its members
- was acceptable to the agencies.

JM agreed to research and draft a proposal for CIC status and KM agreed to draft a proposal for a not-for-profit company. **A7**

AM expressed the view that there should be a principle that no member be excluded from contributing to the activities of the Forum through lack of sufficient personal independent means. BEN and the meeting counselled against payments to recompense members for time given to activities. A one-off payment and by exception might be considered. If a member would prefer to be paid for a substantial gift of time to a particular activity, they would be required to resign for the duration of that activity.

Until such time as the Forum achieves a new legal status, the following draft Terms of Reference will be used to manage the financial operations and risks:

1. Members cannot normally be ‘paid’ for the time they spend contributing to the Urban Forum’s work but can be recompensed for all or part of any reasonable expenses incurred on travel, accommodation in so doing.
2. The Urban Forum as an organisation can be commissioned and recompensed by other organisations, for work done in a voluntary capacity by its members.
3. Forum activities which will turnover more than £3,000 in any one year should be delivered in partnership with another body which carries relevant employer and public liability insurance. This could be an organisation that a member belongs to or an external organisation.
4. Where a volunteer member would prefer to be paid for their contribution they should resign their membership of the Urban Forum for the duration of the paid activity.
5. Volunteer members can apply to the Urban Forum for financial support for expenses to speak at external conferences on behalf of the Urban Forum but must show how their paper contributes to the achievement of the Urban Forum’s current work programme and why they cannot fund the whole of their expenses from their employer or another source. Decisions for amounts up to £250 could be taken by the Chair and Finance Officer. For amounts greater and up to a maximum of £1000 decisions could be made at the next Forum meeting.

8. Awards for Excellence

Nominations were put forward for the following:

- Birmingham’s Natural Capital City Toolkit (proposed by JB)
- Neighbourhoods Green (proposed by AS)
- More from Trees – Mersey Forest Plan (proposed by NL)
- Wigan Greenheart (proposed by NL)
- Northwich Woodlands (proposed by NL/JH)

- Brighton, Hove, Lewes and South Downs Biosphere Reserve if designated (proposed by AM)

The proposers are asked to send AM, AS and MF a couple of paragraphs on why they consider their nomination to be worthy of consideration for an Award (refer to the new criteria please on the web site), and by the end of March 2014 please. **A8**

A potential nomination for Bardsey Island was rejected as being not urban. AB to inform. **A9**

9. Annual Report and Work Programme

AM will report on substantial achievements from the 2013/14 work programme.

2014/15 work programme will include:

- Support for the Society for Ecological Restoration Conference 2015 – resilience (RS/DH/ALL)
- Pro-environmental behaviours (AB)
- Review of recent initiatives by social landlords to engage communities in urban greening and planning implications thereof (Community Engagement & CPD for Planners T&F Groups)
- Engaging children – Wild Network, Citizen Science, Bioblitz (JM/JLW)
- Outreach with MAB family organisations on urban issues and biosphere reserves (AB/AM)
- New economic models for managing the green and blue infrastructure of urban areas (NG?)
- Water issues/Horizon 2020 across Europe (GL)

10. Social Media Workshop

Following presentations and discussion it was agreed that AB would set up (and provide lead management for) a LinkedIn group account for the Forum. KM was asked to delay further exploration of Facebook on behalf of the Forum but may use this media for communicating about the Art of Nature events. Other opportunities such as a Twitter account, a page on Project Dirt or Ning will also be looked at. **A10**

11. AOB

JLW will work up a proposal about the future engagement of artists with the Forum. PF thanked NG and AM for helpful responses to the NRW Corporate Plan.

12. Dates of forthcoming meetings

As a general rule we are trying to organise Forum meetings at the end of the future Art of Nature events to keep travel costs down. It was no longer considered practical to commit to a meeting in Tipton in June or in Belfast in September (although the agencies will still meet then) so please remove these dates from your diary.

- 2nd June Liverpool lunch at 12 for 12.30 start, National Wildflower Centre
- October Birmingham/Black Country (NB will not now be the 6th, so new date tbc by JLW)
- Camley Street Natural Park, London February 2015 tbc