



UK Man and the
Biosphere
Programme
Urban Forum

Minutes of the UK MAB Urban Forum meeting held 22nd September 2015 at Defra, Noble House, Smith Square London

1. Present

Ambra Burls	(AB)	Bangor University (Vice Chair) (Skype)
David Goode	(DG)	Independent
Mathew Frith	(MF)	London Wildlife Trust
Peter Frost	(PF)	Natural Resources Wales (Skype)
Nick Grayson	(NG)	Biophilic Cities Network
David Haley	(DH)	Manchester Metropolitan University
Chamu Kuppuswamy	(CK)	University of Hertfordshire
Alison Millward	(AM)	Independent Consultant (Chair – first half)
Kerry Morrison	(KM)	Independent Artist
Jane Houghton	(JH)	Natural England
Elizabeth Rollinson	(ER)	Linnaean Society
Richard Scott	(RS)	Landlife (Chair Second half)
Peter Shirley	(PS)	Independent
Judy Ling Wong	(JLW)	Black Environment Network

2. Apologies

John Box, Peter Cush, Samantha Davenport, Ian Douglas, Philip James, John Millar, Paul Nolan, Julie Procter, Joe Ravetz, Terry Robinson, Alan Scott, Richard Sharland.

A special welcome was given to CK on her first meeting.

3. Minutes of last meeting

Minutes of the last meeting were accepted as a true record.

4. Matters arising

Thanks to MF and AS for progressing with the Awards

JLW reported the most recent Art of Nature Event, staged in Wales with beautiful weather, and a walk overlooking the Menai straights, with great feedback from all involved. This had been the case with all of the events from London, Liverpool,

Tipton, large or small and each developed their own special character. The themes in all events have been strong and a valuable addition to the UKMAB programme. Future funding opportunities to be explored eg Arts Research Council.

NG reported Buglife's Urban Buzz Project. An eight City programme was to begin in 2016, including Birmingham. RS and SD included on Steering Committee.

AM handed over to RS as the new Chair of the Urban Forum. On behalf of the group RS thanked and acknowledged Alison's great contribution, especially in bringing new dimensions and fresh approaches to the Forum. RS explained he was eager to build on this, and take on the Chair for a similar length of time before passing on the baton. He looked forward to continuing the development of lively and provocative themes to make the best use we can of the Unesco connection as the only urban group of its kind amongst the Man and the Biosphere network.

5. Financial report

Forum has **£5556.31** at present moment, prior to any travel expenses from today. The Art of Nature Events earned **£1123.25** for the Forum.

6. Awards for Excellence

MF sought to confirm that the Awards are given to recognised the achievement of projects and **all agreed**.

DG asked if we could find a better title for the award such as the National Award for Urban Wildlife or Urban Nature Conservation. ER recommended holding an annual event for award giving, NG recommended finding a sponsor for such an event from the City and JH requested that a journal article be written to support the award giving event.

Action 1: MF, AS and SD to look into alternative models for award ceremonies.

AB confirmed her willingness to commission award plaques for Buglife, Natural Capital Planning Tool and the Mersey Forest Plan.

Action 2: AM to confirm plaque text and award arrangements for Buglife with MF.

New Awards

After much discussion of points for and against an award for the Olympic Park, it was agreed to hold the assessment in abeyance for 2-3 more years. Points for included a biodiversity plan having been written for the whole project area, a landscape architect-led construction programme and the pop-up books designed by UCL to illustrate the different phases in the degeneration and regeneration of the site. Points against included the destruction of existing habitat, false claims about the innovative nature of the use of wildflower mixes (as Landlife had been doing this a decade before) and an unwillingness of managers to consider constructive criticism.

Action 3: JLW to assess the award for Urban Growth.

Action 4: PRS, JH and DG to assess the Milton Keynes Parks Trust.

Action 5: GL and AM to assess Welsh Water's Water Quality Strategy. **AM** to contact PF for background.

Action 6: RS and KM to assess the Wigan Greenheart landscapes now considered by DG to be in good order.

Action 7: RS and KM to assess Northwich Woodlands.

Potential Scottish sites to be assessed might include Jupiter Artland near Edinburgh and the Helix at Falkirk (the park with the Kelpies).

7. Conferences

The earlier debate about the Olympic Park generated ideas about holding a future conference on the changing iconography of the beauty of urban landscapes which RS suggested the poet Lemn Sissay (the new Chancellor of MMU) might chair. DG and RS noted that Ian Rotherham at Sheffield University and John Rodwell had been exploring similar issues at SER 2015. Themes might include the tyranny of typologies, redemption and reparation.

Action 8: DH and RS to circulate their summary note of the SER2015 conference and provide a short de-brief for UF members at the beginning of the next meeting.

8. Works programme Updates

8.1 Biosphere Reserves and MAB Lima Congress 2016

AB reported on the recent nominations for Dublin Bay and the Isle of Man and the need for the Urban Forum to engage with EuroMAB and other international urban ecology networks such as URBIO and SURE. SER is also holding a European Conference in Munich next year. This could build on some of the SER 2015 session materials. It was hoped that funds could be raised to support AB and ANOther's attendance and presentation at the MAB Lima Congress. PF asked that the offer of support to any other country wishing to explore the setting up of urban BRs be made by the attendee(s).

Action 9: NG to explore potential bursary funding through Birmingham University if there could be an opportunity to present on the Natural Capital Planning Tool in Lima too.

Action 10: AB to apply to Awards for All and liaise with RS over attendance arrangements.

Action 11: KM to explore bursary funding.

The Sutton Park and Cannock Chase BR proposal may become a key project for the incipient Combined Authority in the West Midlands.

8.2 Art and Nature

JLW has negotiated holding the landmark celebratory event at the Eden Project at the end of 2016/early 2017.

DH was happy to develop an event for Manchester in early 2016 to build on connections made at SER 2015 where discussion themes included resilience. Oxford, London, Edinburgh and Newcastle have also offered venues.

8.3 Conferences

ER reported that the Linnaean Society will be holding a Wild New Territories event in the autumn of 2016.

Action 14: PRS, ER, RS and Tony Jones were still keen to pursue a possible conference on non-native invasive species.

8.4 Publications

Action 12: MF circulated copies of ‘The Benefits of SINCS’ and ‘Peaty Finders’ and will send links for the Urban Forum website.

AB still keen to write a position statement of pro-environmental behaviours which should lead to a publication.

Action 13: JH to provide AB with Sarah Preston’s details – the health and wellbeing lead at Natural England.

8.5 Influencing Politicians

DG, KM and DH supported the idea of seeking to influence Labour Party politicians. CIWEM and CIEEM have been/will also be exploring this issue. Partners who spoke on the topic at SER2015 included David Parker, Peter Bridgewater and Andy Moffat.

8.6 Alternative funding models for urban nature conservation

NG reported that Birmingham City Council and Birmingham University were developing a concept of a natural capital balance sheet (to complement outputs from the Natural Capital Planning Tool). Three councils – Birmingham, Manchester and Cambridge – were exploring the notion of ‘Gain Sharing’ the benefits of inward investment from new development to add to Community Infrastructure Levy receipts. This was another potential topic that could be used to influence politicians.

9. Website

Action 14: RS/PS asked CK to look over and feedback on the state of the Urban Forum website. DG asked that the personal websites of members be promoted on the site. AM commented that recent information on Art and Nature events and SER215 could also be added.

10. Limited Company Status

AM reported that the the UK MAB Committee had kindly reviewed the Mem and Arts for the new company and that subsequently the UK Ambassador to UNESCO had also asked to review the draft Mem and Arts.

Action 15: AM to progress with James Bridge from the UK’s UNESCO Office and seek support (and funds) for an Urban Forum presence at the Lima Congress.

AOB

SER2015 in Manchester on the theme of ecological resilience proved to be very stimulating with a good level of participation in the arts related sessions. Although sadly too expensive for many, this highlighted problems of gaining sufficient sponsorship for gatherings of this kind. It proved a very valuable exchange, with strong urban themes connecting through the central theme of resilience in ecosystems, and therefore the important role of people. Abstracts are available online.

Network Ecologies – Scarborough 2015 – attracted 30 participants (including JLW and DH) and a deep exploration of issues.

Greater London National Park City – Ted Trzyna (IUCN) will soon be meeting the organising group which includes MF and JLW. DG said the concept was non-threatening of existing landscape designations. DH and PRS had been impressed with the success of the crowd funding effort which had raised circa £30k.

Archive - AM wished to record the Urban Forum's grateful thanks to Martin Smith at Natural England for all his help in cataloguing and scanning key documents for the archive.

Action 16: AM to send MS a thank you card and token of appreciation.

Warm congratulations were extended to KM on the award of a PhD for her thesis on "Exploring the Cultural Ecosystem Services Associated with Unmanaged Urban Brownfield Sites".

The Ecological Garden at the Natural History Museum is likely to be much altered if not lost by the forthcoming expansion of visitor facilities at the NHM.

Action 17: RS to write to NHM seeking assurances that the materials for the garden (much of which was donated by Landlife and others) would be safeguarded.

DG's Walk About the City will be promoted on YouTube and members noted an initiative being led by Florence University on Sustainable Edibles.

Date of Next meeting

26th January, 2-5pm, Manchester Town Hall. Exact room to be confirmed.

May 2016 – Woodberry Meadows, London tbc.