

UK Urban Ecology Forum

Minutes of the meeting held at Natural England, London Thursday November 23rd 2017

Present

Jane Houghton (JH)	Natural England
Nigel Lawson (NL) (Assisting RS)	University of Manchester
Judy Ling-Wong (JLW)	BEM
Richard Scott (RS) (Chair)	Eden Project
Peter Shirley (PS)	Independent

By telephone link

John Box (JB)	Independent
Sarah Lindley (SL)	University of Manchester
Terry Robinson (TR)	Independent

Apologies

Samantha Davenport, Ian Douglas, Pete Frost, Nick Grayson, David Haley, Alison Millward, Kerry Morrison, Julie Proctor, Joanne Tippett

Minutes of meeting held May 17th 2017

The minutes were accepted

Actions from meeting held May 17th 2017

- ***Invasive species (Ken Thompson event):***
PS felt that enthusiasm for this event had waned and RS confirmed that there had been no response from The Linnean Society. It was decided to shelve this idea.
- ***Urban Pioneer: PF to provide NE with findings from Wales***
Carried forward
- ***GHIA Project: The Forum to produce a position statement for the project covering potential input by both the Forum as a whole and by individual members. All members to liaise with RS and JH***
Carried forward
- ***Handbook of Urban Ecology, Second Edition: ID to circulate notes to Forum members. Members to provide ID with ideas and offers to contribute.***
ID has produced a progress report which was distributed to attendees and is attached hereto. The contract from Routledge is expected soon. The second edition will give greater weight to the practicalities,, policy issues and public involvement aspects of urban ecology.
- ***NL to distribute all presentations to members.***

Done

- ***ID to investigate potential for a link with other UNESCO organisations such as UNEP (UN environment programme) and UN Habitats***

Ongoing- carried forward.

Discussion on future work and contributions by the Forum

Themes discussed included:

Natural Greenspace Standards: JB felt that the standards were being undermined and that the environmentalists need to react.

Actions:

- **The Forum to produce a position paper (JB)**

Natural Capital Committee (NCC): It was felt that more should be done regarding attaching real economic value to urban greenspaces and that the Forum should make contact with the NCC which is attached to the Treasury and chaired by Professor Dieter Helm. Consideration should be given on how this fits in with Natural England's urban greenspace projects.

Action:

- **RS to instigate a telecom with JH and JB on taking this forward.** Update – please see 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>

Loss of greenspaces; responding to the crisis (PS)

Research into topical issues for society: Issues affecting ordinary everyday life such as relating to nature.

Case studies of good practice- disseminating a positive agenda: (JLW, TR and PS). With public sector funding drying up local communities require aid and advice on how to improve green spaces. Enhancing awareness of examples of good practice on the theme of "if they can do it, we can too" would be a worthwhile contribution. Examples of recent good practice mentioned include Black Country Garden City, Burgess Park in Southwark, Greater London National Parks City initiative, etc.

SL, JH, RS and JLW pointed out the importance of using social media as a platform for bringing people together and networking within the community.

All members to feed information to PS by end January 2018

Actions:

- **Case studies of good practice (PS to co-ordinate).**
- **All members of the Forum to provide special narratives and examples, both National and International by latest end January 2018 to PS**
- **The Forum to use the case studies to produce a report for dissemination via an event bringing people together and/or social media.**

London National Parks City

JLB reported how the London National Parks City initiative is encouraging an international movement and has attracted the interest of World Urban Parks

<https://www.worldurbanparks.org/en/>

The initiative draws inspiration from rural National Parks and highlights the potential for nature in an urban environment and has facilitated £9 million funding from GLC into community spaces and discussion with the Mayor of London on continuing collaboration. Whilst the model is still just a concept and work is now concentrating on structural and communal issues, 1000 councillors have signed up to a declaration to be issued in 2018. Discussion focused on how to translate this initiative elsewhere.

Awards

- Despite recent inactivity and the loss of the use of the link to UNESCO it was agreed that the awards process should be continued and that it should include awarding an event, a narrative and a publication.
To ease and speed up assessment it will now be by doodle poll of members of the Forum.
- Potential recipients to be considered include:
 - o The Routledge Handbook of Urban Ecology, first edition
 - o MyParkScotland Cloud Funding.
- JB pointed out that the Forum has already agreed to award Birmingham Natural Capital Tool but that either that neither the award certificate or a plaque had been presented to Birmingham City Council

Actions:

- **PS to provide NL with suitable wording for the web site**
- **PS or JB to provide NL with wording for the citation and plaque regarding the award to Birmingham Natural Capital Tool**
- **NL to arrange for certificates and plaques**

New Members

The need for new members was discussed including the need to attract active younger people.

It was agreed to offer observer status to potential new members such as Duncan McKay of Natural England.

Action:

- **All members to make recommendations to Richard Scott**

Web site

The web site is in the process of being updated. As well as a news section it now also includes a 'Topical Posts' section.

Actions:

- **All members are urged to contribute material and to send it to NL**
- **NL to arrange for various amendments to be made and items and links to be added to the site including JB's suggested edits and The Routledge Handbook of Urban Ecology, first edition.**

Financial Report

PS reported:

- Balance at the start of 2017 £4555 including £1275 surplus from the Arts and Nature Project.
- Expenditure re meetings prior to this one £420. Expenditure for meeting held 23/11/2017 estimated at £350-£400, including an ex gratia payment of £200 to Graham Bowden for the maintenance of the web site.
- Balance of funds est. £3700.
- Current income: Nil

JLB agreed for the surplus from the Arts and Nature project to become part of the general balance of available funds. This still means that the Forum will require an injection of funds within the next 18 months to continue hosting meetings etc.

Actions:

- **JH to make a bid to Natural England for £1,500.**
- **JH to liaise with Scottish Natural Heritage, Countryside Council for Wales and Northern Ireland Environment Agency for funding and/or an offer to host a meeting of the Forum including contributing to travel expenses.**

Any other business

Accessible Natural Greenspaces: JH reported on Natural England's collaboration with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the Outdoor Recreation Network on how to get more people outside. The project includes various data sets and the production of natural greenspace maps and will examine health data and greenspace in schools etc. to guide policy and inform spatially on the requirement for and the quality of greenspaces.

Next meeting:

By May 2018. JH to consider linking to a workshop she will be running in Manchester for Urban Pioneer or possibly in Scotland in collaboration with Scottish Natural Heritage and Greenspace Scotland. Members will be advised in good time and if necessary consulted via doodle poll.

Action: JH to speak to Julie Proctor (Greenspace Scotland) and to liaise with RS and NL