

**URBAN FORUM OF THE UK MAN AND THE BIOSPHERE  
COMMITTEE**



Minutes of the meeting held on 17 May 2001 at Centre for Urban and Regional Ecology (CURE), University of Manchester.

**PRESENT**

John Box (Chair)  
Helen Shaw (Secretary)  
George Barker  
Mathew Frith  
Pete Frost  
Chris Gordon  
John Handley

Caroline Harrison  
John Ingram  
Grant Luscombe  
Matthew Wilkinson  
Stephan Pauleit (speaker)  
Darryn McEvoy (speaker)  
Chris Ling (speaker)

1. **APOLOGIES**

Peter Shirley  
David Nicholson-Lord  
John Robbins

Susan Davies  
Matthew Thomas  
Graham Leeks

2. **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

Minutes of the last meeting on 22 February 2001 were amended as follows:

- a) Under Section 8, Matters arising, it was agreed that Chris Gordon should be listed as joint Topic Leader with George Barker for the MAB Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence (4.3).

The minutes were then signed as a correct record.

3. **PRESENTATIONS BY PROFESSOR JOHN HANDLEY, STEPHAN PAULEIT, DARRYN McEVOY AND CHRIS LING (CURE)**

**Introduction to CURE (John Handley)**

The Centre for Urban and Regional Ecology (CURE) was established within the Department of Planning and Landscape, University of Manchester, in 1999. The founder member was Joe Ravetz who has recently published "City Region 2000: Integrated planning for a sustainable environment".

The Centre has an interest in addressing and integrating three new research agendas: Regionalism; Sustainability; and The Rebuilding of Environmental Capital. This stems from the holistic vision of Joe Ravetz. The research agendas are managed as three programme areas: Sustainable City-Region; Landscape Impacts and Futures; and Land Restoration and Management.

John Handley listed a wide range of programmes and organisations that he is involved with including:

The NERC Urban Regeneration and the environment programme (URGENT)

DETR Priorities for Biodiversity Research

The British Ecological Society Public Affairs Committee (which has an urban ecology brief)

Sustainability North West.

JH stressed that he would like to get more involved with the work of the Urban Forum to create linkages between these programmes.

**ACTION 3-1**      **John Box** to work with John Handley to develop better linkages and integration between the Urban Forum and CURE

(Secretaries Note: More information on CURE and the projects can be found at

<http://www.art.man.ac.uk/planning/cure/>)

### **Land Restoration and Management (Chris Ling)**

This programme aims to approach land reclamation through working with nature in an ecological approach” aimed at achieving long-term sustainability of the restored landscape. This includes working with natural recovery, and using the physio-chemical state of each site as a positive asset. The approach also includes the recognition that human involvement with the site is part of the natural ecosystem, and promotes social engagement through effective community involvement.

The CURE Land Restoration and Management programme is currently working with; The Groundwork Changing Places Programme, a Millennium Commission funded programme seeking to implement the ideas at a large scale; developed out of a restoration project on acid spoil at St Helens, Merseyside, a pilot project to examine working with nature and working with people. This work is producing

- An evaluation of the ecological approach to land reclamation,
- Research into the effects of substrate on biodiversity and the ecological approach to land restoration and
- Toolkits for community led regeneration of derelict land (a major project within the European Union's LIFE programme).

### **Discussion**

It was noted that there is a need to examine how to take the project work forward in ecological and generational timescales after the initial project funding has ceased.

**John Handley** informed the Urban Forum that he had proposed a “UK Land Reclamation Trust” to be run in a similar way to the National Trust. English Partnerships and Groundwork are now taking this proposal forward.

There was a recognised need to produce a landscape-regeneration led strategy and a need to ensure that the multifunctional approach to landscape currently used in rural areas is applied to urban areas. This is currently not addressed in the Urban White Paper. The Urban Forum therefore needs to examine how it can better influence the planning system. **Chris Ling** pointed out that this would include finding money for ecological restoration and to maintain restored sites. This means addressing the question How to value land for social and environmental resources? **Pete Frost** noted that whilst sustainable economic development is mentioned in the Urban White Paper

there is no mention of biodiversity, and to achieve sustainable development economics, social and biodiversity issues must all be addressed.

**John Handley** reported that a breakthrough in this was with the North West Development Agency who has now agreed to carry out ecological audits on development sites.

**ACTION 3-2**      **John Box** to work with John Handley to examine ways in which the Urban Forum can help support the implementation of a UK Land Reclamation Trust and develop a biodiversity agenda to influence urban planning and policy.

**ACTION 3-3**      **John Box/John Handley** to invite Emyr Poole, Sustainability Manager with English Partnerships, to come and talk to the Urban Forum.

### **Landscape Impacts and Futures Project (Stephan Pauleit)**

The aim of this project is to give a better understanding of the physical structure and uses of a city environment.

A GIS study of the city of Munich was presented as an example of this work and similar work is being carried out on Merseyside. According to official figures Munich has 60% of land cover under sealed surfaces, however a finer scale analysis reveals that in fact only 30% of land is sealed, the remainder being made up of small areas of parks and gardens etc. The value of these small areas to ecological performance was examined through various studies; including overlaying data on urban climate and how habitat effects climate; an examination of the possibility of collecting rainwater from building runoff to supplement the water supply improving hydrological problems by relieving drainage in flash rainfall situations; and the possibilities for carbon sequestration.

The main conclusion was that ecological performance improves with increasing vegetation cover. This has important implications for urban planning as although the compact city will have better ecological performance at the regional scale, at a local scale performance will be worse. In Munich areas such as railway lines and an airport, which are now redundant, are being redeveloped. The findings of this research show that caution should be applied to such redevelopments, as the areas are valuable for ecological performance.

### **Discussion**

It can be difficult to find fine scale maps suitable for this kind of use in urban areas, for example CCW have mapped Wales, but missed out urban areas.

**John Ingram** said that courser databases of land cover are available through the IGBP DIS office (See <http://www.ngdc.noaa.gov/paleo/igbp-dis/index.html>)

**Carolyn Harrison** said that it would be good to look at some of these issues on the ground to provide a 3-dimensional analysis

### **A Systems Perspective on the Sustainable City/Region (Darryn McEvoy)**

This project is involved in examining the organisation of material flows, actions and impacts at various spatial scales.

Current research approaches include:

Urban and regional metabolism  
Ecological footprint  
Emissions estimations  
Ecological Process Modelling  
Scenario and Systems Modelling

with the aim of providing a mass balance diagram for the North west.

From this scenario models “Atlas NW” and FutureQUEST have been developed to explore present states and different regional futures. This is useful as a public awareness tool as well as a tool for policy makers to investigate the possible impacts of planning decisions.

### **General Discussion on CURE presentations**

**Carolyn Harrison** asked if working at the regional scale provided the best institutional strategy to promote the environment. This was a particular difficulty in the South East.

**John Handley** replied that the DAs and EA are supportive of the projects and the North West is a frontrunner in sustainability issues due to Sustainability North West. Leadership is very important in pushing sustainability into the agenda, and also environmental work contributes 17% to the economy of the North West and so the NWDA regard the environment as good for development potential.

**Carolyn Harrison** asked how the areas of study compared to Biosphere Reserves. Some work was done in Munich on how the Biosphere Reserve principles could be applied but there were problems with acceptance by local people as they viewed the designation as a constraint. There are however good principles in the BR Concept, and the establishment of an Urban Biosphere Reserve in the North West is a possibility if CURE can provide the influence on local people, then the Urban Forum could take the proposal forward with DETR.

**John Handley** also would like to collaborate with the Urban Forum on the CURE project on contaminated land. **John Box** explained that a work programme was usually initiated in March/April after discussions in September but that projects can be offered at any time.

ACTION 3-4      **John Handley** to discuss possibilities for collaboration with the Urban Forum at the next CURE Management Meeting

ACTION 3-5      **John Box** to discuss with CURE how best to initiate work on a proposal for a new Urban Biosphere Reserve within the North West Region.

ACTION 3-6      **John Handley** and **Carolyn Harrison** to consider how to raise the Environmental Profile in the South East.

## **4. DISCUSSION OF URBAN FORUM SECRETARIAT**

John Box reported that The Wildlife Trusts UK Office no longer wished to host the Secretariat and that two excellent bids for hosting the Secretariat had been received from the London Wildlife Trust and the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology at Wallingford. The two members from CEH present at the meeting were asked to remain in the room but not take part in the discussion or the voting for the new secretariat. Mathew Frith noted that he is formerly of the LWT, but it was agreed that he should take part in the discussions in his capacity as EN Urban Advisor.

John Box stated that a decision should be made in the realisation that the Urban Forum is changing, it has become more professional, and has international links through MAB.

The LWT bid was considered valuable as it would maintain links with the wildlife trusts. Also the LWT has just taken over the secretariat for the Urban Wildlife Partnership. The CEH bid has advantages of links to URGENT and MAB and a greater potential for linking with policy makers such as DETR.

In discussion, criteria were agreed for the Secretariat and the relative merits of each bid assessed against these criteria.

The criteria were:

1. Continuity
2. Efficient Administration
3. Professional Service
4. Easily Contactable
5. Knowledge of the Urban Forum subject areas
6. Positioning

The assessment was:

1. CEH as staff turnover was likely to be less
2. Both organisations could provide the service required
3. The office at CEH is set up to administer in this kind of role, whereas the LWT are primarily a conservation organisation
4. Both organisations have the benefit of email etc
5. LWT are more knowledgeable in urban issues for wildlife
6. Although there was a value to both organisations, it was decided that they had different strengths. It was decided that CEH was better placed for future issues that may arise, for example with DETR.

It was decided that CEH should take over the Secretariat, and that links with the LWT should developed through work with George Barker and Chris Gordon on the Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence.

- ACTION 4-7      **John Box & Mathew Frith** to arrange for the Secretariat funding from EN to be paid CEH
- ACTION 4-8      **Helen Shaw** to set up new Secretariat at CEH

## 5.      **PROGRESS ON WORK PROGRAMME 2001/02**

- 5.1.      A proposal was tabled from Matthew Wilkinson and Helen Shaw for a redesign to the Urban Forum web site.

It was agreed that the redesign of the website should be carried out, and that the web will form an important tool for the dissemination of Urban Forum information into the future.

**John Box** noted concern that the proposal for a new URL should not distance the Urban Forum from the MAB connection.

**Helen Shaw** explained that with the use of meta tags it should be possible for the search engines to find the Urban Forum when a search for MAB was executed. The use of hyperlinks between the UK MAB and Urban Forum sites should also keep connections seamless.

The proposal for the redesign was accepted with no major comments; it was decided that the new URL for the site should be [www.ukmaburbanforum.org.uk](http://www.ukmaburbanforum.org.uk)

**John Ingram** said that he felt UNESCO MAB and UK MAB would be keen to have the MAB affiliation acknowledged in the URL.

The site was estimated to take approximately 5-6 days to redesign, and there would be a small cost for the purchase and set up of the new URL. The web site redesign will therefore cost £2000. It was agreed that this money should come from existing Urban Forum funds

ACTION 5-9      **John Box** to arrange transfer of monies held on behalf of the Urban Forum to CEH for development of the Urban Forum web site

ACTION 5-10     **Helen Shaw** and **Matthew Wilkinson** to develop the web site

- 5.2. **Pete Frost** presented a paper on Urban Biosphere Reserves There were many positive comments on the paper, and it was felt that it described the scope and purpose of Biosphere Reserves well.

PF asked for some recommendations and advice on the best way to publish the paper, with an initial aim of publication in "*Town and Country Planning*".

**John Box** said that he could help with advice on publication in "*Town and Country Planning*".

**Mathew Frith** advised that *Urban Environment Today* may also be interested in the paper.

**John Ingram** noted that there may be some scope for publishing in a MAB Publication such as "*Nature and Resources*" or "*InfoMAB*"

**John Ingram** asked if it would be correct offer the paper for discussion, at the DETR workshop to debate the Biosphere Reserve Review, before publication. It was felt however that as DETR have already given the Urban Forum permission to publish comments on the review, it was best to go ahead and publish the paper.

Suitable pictures are also needed before publication.

ACTION 5-11      **John Box** to discuss publication in *Town and Country Planning* with PF

ACTION 5-12      **Mathew Frith** to discuss publication in *Urban Environment Today* with PF

ACTION 5-13      **All** to help with provision of suitable pictures

Secretary's Notes

Information for the above mentioned publications is on the web at

[http://www.tcpa.org.uk/archive\\_press.htm](http://www.tcpa.org.uk/archive_press.htm) (Town and Country Planning)

<http://landor.co.uk/uet/> (Urban Environment Today)

The last "Nature and Resources" was published in 1999 and MAB are not continuing the publication of this, or the "InfoMAB" series. If anyone would like a current UNESCO MAB publications list or copies of publications please ask HS or see <http://www.unesco.org/mab/publications/publications.htm>

- 5.3. **John Ingram** gave a brief update on recent advances in the planning of the URGENT/EuroMAB urban science meeting April 2002. JI met with the European science Foundation (ESF) and discussed the possibilities of developing an ESF Forward look Proposal on Urban Science. The UK and the Urban Forum are well positioned to take a leadership role in this European dimension of Urban Science.

ACTION 5-14 **Helen Shaw** to circulate ESF proposal with Minutes (Note: to be circulated later – after further discussion with potential donors)

## 6. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

- 6.1. ITEM 4 ACTION: Christine French to send the Annual Report for 2000/2001 to EN and CCW.

**This has been done**

- 6.2. ITEM 5 ACTIONS: all topic leaders to write paragraph explaining their topic, for posting on the web site. all members to inform HS who the 'web master' is in their organisation.

**This will be picked up within the new web design.**

ACTION 6-14 **All topic leaders** to write paragraph explaining their topic, for posting on the web site. All members to inform HS who the 'web master' is in their organisation.

- 6.3. ITEM 6.1 ACTION: Gerald Dawe to speak to Richard Lloyd of the Countryside Agency, who is also on the UK-MAB Committee, in respect of funding the above workshops.

**This action has been discharged.**

- 6.4. ITEM 9.3 ACTION: John Box to ask Carolyn Harrison to look at procedures for joining.

**CH has been working on this, and will produce a list of criteria.**

ACTION 6-15 **Carolyn Harrison** to produce a list of criteria for new memberships.

## 7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 7.1. John Ingram asked if there were any formal articles of association. John Box replied that he did not believe there were any formal articles and that the background to the Urban Forum is set out in the Annual Report & Work Programme.

ACTION 7-16 **John Box** and **Helen Shaw** to investigate further.

- 7.2. John Box proposed that CURE take over the responsibility for the Urban Forum Library currently housed with Ian Douglas and that CURE would catalogue the collection to make more available to members.  
It was agreed that this was a good idea.

- ACTION 7-17 **Matthew Wilkinson and John Handley** to liase with Ian Douglas for CURE to take over responsibility for the Urban Forum library.  
ACTION 7-18 **Helen Shaw** to liase with Matthew Wilkinson to make a library list available on the web.

## 8. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

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|------------------|---|
| 5 September 2001 | (Groundwork, Birmingham)                                |
| 5 December 2001  | (Room AG21 Greater London Authority,<br>Marsham Street) |
| Early March 2002 | (Carr's Lane, Church Centre, Birmingham)                |
| 15 May 2002      | (National Wildflower Centre, Liverpool)                 |