



Minutes of the UK MAB Urban Forum meeting held 23 February 2005 at the University of Manchester

Present

Peter Cush	(PC)	Environment & Heritage Service
Gerald Dawe	(GD)	Independent consultant
Jane Fisher	(JF)	CEH Wallingford
Chris Gordon	(CG)	East Midlands Region, Countryside Agency
John Handley	(JH)	University of Manchester
David Knight	(DK)	English Nature
Grant Luscombe	(GL)	Landlife
Peter Morgan	(PM)	Groundwork UK
David Nicholson-Lord	(DNL)	Independent consultant
Peter Shirley	(PS)	The West Midlands Wildlife Trusts
Matt Fry	(MJF)	CEH Wallingford (Secretary)
Susannah Gill	(SG)	University of Manchester
Alan Barber	(AB)	Simon Fellow, CURE, University of Manchester

1. Apologies and Welcome

Apologies

Moira Anderson	(MA)	Carolyn Harrison	(CH)
Ian Angus	(IA)	Graham Leeks	(GJLL)
Ian Douglas	(ID)	Alan Scott	(AS)
Peter Frost	(PF)		

GD welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked John Handley and the University of Manchester for hosting it.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the December 2004 meeting were signed by GD as an accurate record.

3. Green Infrastructure for Climate Change Adaptation

John Handley gave a presentation on some of CURE's work on green infrastructure as part of a joint project funded by EPSRC called ASSCUE (www.art.man.ac.uk/PLANNING/cure/ASCCUE.htm)

Adobe Acrobat documents containing the presentation can be found on the Urban Forum website: www.ukmaburbanforum.org.uk/meetings.htm

4. Urban greenspace and climate change (Susannah Gill)

Susannah Gill is a PhD student at CURE working on a project on Urban Greenspace and Climate Change. She gave an excellent talk on this subject. The presentation can be found on the Urban Forum website: www.ukmaburbanforum.org.uk/meetings.htm

5. Assessment of the capacity of Local Authorities to undertake integrated management of greenspace networks (Alan Barber)

Alan Barber is the Simon Industrial Fellow at CURE, and a commissioner for CABE since the addition of CABE Space. He spoke about his research into 'Management of Multi-functional Greenspace in England'. The first part of the research is soon to be published in a Greenspace publication called 'Green Futures' and this report acknowledges the Urban Forum for putting this topic on its agenda a few years ago. Alan spoke about the decline in greenspace management as at odds with the new 'sustainability agenda' currently being spoken of since the Rogers report 'Towards an urban renaissance'. The visions of this 'New Agenda' were said to include, as well as the Rogers report, the Urban greenspace taskforce, Sustainable Communities (and not only for growth areas), the idea of Liveability (and the means to make local concerns into national policy). Tools for this agenda include bodies such as CABE Space, funding streams such as the liveability fund, statutory tools such as the Local Community Strategy and documents such as PPG:17.

Nationally England has 140 000ha of urban greenspace (an area nearly as large as the whole of London, at 158 000 ha). This urban greenspace is under threat if it is underperforming.

Multi-functional greenspace was defined as having ecological, economic, socio-economic, historical and aesthetic aspects. The study selected 12 local authorities randomly, but providing a range of types of authority from London Boroughs to Urban-Rural. These authorities were then asked a series of questions from a questionnaire to assess their approaches to greenspace management. The 70 questions were phrased in such a way so as not to give the impression that the authorities were being assessed, and covered the core areas of: their concepts of what they manage; political direction; organisational structure; resources and staff development; partnerships and community relations; and how achievement is measured. In addition a number of 'case studies' were assessed in a similar way to show how particular approaches came across. These case studies included flag-ship councils such as Halton and Stockport in the UK and the Central Parks authority in the US, amongst others.

The research also came up with 12 indicators of good practice, such as authorities running programmes for health, having annual reports for greenspace, and having a published strategy. Of these good practice scores Stockport and Halton came out on top, with London Boroughs high up the list. Numerous other indices were produced to compare authorities, including numbers of staff within certain disciplines, the uptake of practice laid out in reports (such as 'Park Life', PPG:17, etc.), cost per ha. Alan described how this information feeds in to develop a narrative to show the history and development of the various ways of working within the authorities studied. The Green Futures report tends to follow this narrative rather than simply summarise statistics. Included is a chapter on learning where things went wrong, producing early conclusions from these study. A further chapter, 'The Way Forward', highlights the important aspects of getting this subject on the agenda, getting it resourced, and being sustainable. Interestingly, the statistics show that there is a £126m real-term decline in

funding over 20 years, excluding costs of work in additional functions not performed at the beginning of this period, and that this deficit is not likely to be addressed through the channelling of resources through local government.

It is hoped that the report will be published around Easter, and could become an Urban Forum publication.

Action 5.1 Gerald Dawe to read report and produce Award for Excellence review

6. Progress of work programme projects towards the annual report 04/05

Current progress on the work programme was discussed, with emphasis on producing end-of-year summaries for the annual report.

Action 6.1 MJF to summarise JH and SG's talk as summary of progress on JH's 'Planning for climate change in urban environments' project

Action 6.2 MJF to ask Pete Frost for progress on 'Change in biodiversity in relation to climate change', 'Review of social and community criteria for selection of local sites of importance for nature conservation' and 'Urban Biosphere Reserves'

Action 6.3 GD to ask Ian Douglas about progress on 'Response of urban pest species to climate change' and 'Why nature is good for you' projects

Action 6.4 PJ to produce report / excerpt from book for project 'Urban habitat mapping and evaluation' for forum to comment upon

Action 6.5 GD to email MJF report on 'Street Trees and Sustainability' for distribution to forum

Action 6.6 DK to send summary paragraph on EN / Inter-Agency group progress on 'Urban Habitat Classification scheme'

Action 6.7 MJF to email Mathew Frith regarding 'Links with CAE Space' and in particular document on neighbourhood housing and Greenspace

7. Matters arising from minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting

8. Any Other Business

Action 7.1 PC to email MJF preliminary input into George Barker's Award for Excellence assessment

Action 7.2 MJF to send around progress report on NPAWC with minutes

DK and SNIFFER project – I've asked DK about this

Action 7.3 MJF to circulate Urban Wildlife Network info for comments from members.

PM passed around copies of information on CABERNET 2005 conference. See website www.cabernet.org.uk

9. Dates of Next Meetings

- 24 May 2005 - Wales (Cardiff) to be followed by presentation to Cwm Talwg
 14 September 2005 - London / Birmingham, location tbc
 6 December 2005 - Birmingham / London, location tbc

Outstanding Actions

Review of Outstanding Actions from September 2004 meeting:	
Incomplete:	
Action 3.1. MJF to send letter and certificate to Landlife	Ongoing
Action 3.2. MJF to send certificate to Welsh sites and find requirements for presentation of plaque, etc.	Discussions started and ongoing
Action 3.7. PF to get back to DK concerning nomination of Phil Castieaux.	Ongoing
Action 3.8. PC to collate information for nomination of George Barker	Ongoing
Action 4.1. PF to discuss MoA with DK for full discussion at February meeting	Ongoing