



The UK Man and the Biosphere Committee Urban Forum

Minutes of the UK MAB Urban Forum meeting held 27th June 2012 at Wolverhampton Science Park.

1. Present

John Box	(JB)	Atkins Environment
Ambra Burls	(AB)	Bangor University (Vice Chair)
Peter Cush	(PC)	NIER
Ian Douglas	(ID)	University of Manchester (Chair)
Paul Evans	(PE)	Writer and Broadcaster
Peter Frost	(PF)	Countryside Council for Wales
Nigel Lawson	(NL)	University of Manchester (Secretary)
Samantha Lyme	(SL)	Natural England
Alison Millward	(AM)	Independent Consultant
Terry Robinson	(TR)	Independent Consultant
Alan Scott	(AS)	Independent Consultant
Peter Shirley.	(PS)	Forum Fellow
Judy Ling Wong	(JLW)	Black Environment Network

The Chair expressed thanks on behalf of the Forum to Chris Baines for his hospitality on the evening prior to the meeting, to Martin Harrison and Nerys Jones for demonstrating their community projects to members of the Forum and to Alison Millward for organising the tour of the community projects and this meeting in Wolverhampton and he requested that the Secretary write to them.

2. Apologies

Mathew Frith, David Goode, John Handley, Jane Houghton, Grant Luscombe, Chris Nevin, Julie Proctor, Joe Ravetz, Richard Scott, Joanne Tippet

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes were approved.

4. Matters arising

Outstanding actions from the last meeting were reviewed:

- A1 Request for publications for the Forum web site: All members are reminded to send appropriate publications for inclusion on the Forum's web site to NL. **A1**
- A2 and A3 have been done.
- A4 is an agenda item and is dealt with below
- A5 News is still awaited from JH on the proposal to aim for Biosphere Reserve Status for the Lower Thames Estuary **A2**.
- A6 The application by Brighton for Biosphere Reserve status was proceeding and MF undertook to approach Richard Howarth with regard to Brighton and Hove Council hosting a meeting of the Forum. No more information was available and this item is carried forward **A3**

- A7 Review of the Forum accounts on an annual basis on behalf of the Secretariat: following the meeting ID arranged for Yahya Al-Witri, Finance officer of the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council to undertake this task and NL will be liaising with him [A4](#)
- A8 is an agenda item and is dealt with below
- A9 Consideration by MF on how to react to the poor response to the circular to the All Party Parliamentary Groups possibly interested in urban greenspace is still awaited [A5](#)
- A 10 Training Sessions for RTPI. SL and AM will investigate further [A6](#)
- A 11 to A 24 are agenda items and are dealt with below

5a Greenspace Toolkits

ID and PJ have taken this forward by compiling a preliminary list of existing toolkits and other methods for the evaluation of ecosystem services. Discussion focused on practical needs, organisational issues and the challenges posed by integrating quantitative values with cultural, communal, linguistic and artistic elements. It was agreed that the best way forward would be to hold three events: two separate workshops, one covering economic/scientific issues and a second one covering artistic and cultural aspects, followed by a conference which would bring together the outcomes from the two workshops and report on the value of greenspace toolkits. ID undertook to circulate a more precise plan in advance of the next meeting. [A7](#)

5b Passing Through: Urban Greening and Future Water for Town and Cities

ID reported that the Royal Horticultural Society was very interested in the Forum's potential involvement in this issue. Following discussion it was felt that this is an increasingly important and relevant issue but that it is also also being addressed by several other organisations such as CIRIA and SEPA and that the Forum needs to establish clarity on how it can contribute to the debate. PF advised that he could liaise with the SUDS Group for Wales and it was decided that a sub-group of the Forum, initially comprising JHan, ID, SL, PF and NL, would consider how best to take this forward [A8](#).

6. UK Biodiversity Steering Group

SL reported that the UK Biodiversity Steering Group has been disbanded and that Defra had developed a new structure covering the delivery of its biodiversity programmes. SL felt that the Forum could potentially contribute to the People Engagement Group. SL and AM undertook to investigate opportunities for the Forum [A9](#)

7. Winding up of Urban Wildlife Network

The Urban Wildlife Network (UWN) was wound up in March 2012 and it kindly agreed to transfer its assets amounting to £4,583.64 to the Forum. ID formally expressed the Forum's gratitude for the donation and formally thanked the UWN.

8. Defra Green Infrastructure Partnership

ID attended the Green Infrastructure Partnership (GIP) Workshop in Solihull on 27th February 2012 and reported that whilst it was well attended people seemed unclear about what it might achieve. Any actions would depend on volunteers as no funds were available. GIP's objectives are to improve and strengthen green infrastructure and ecological networks. Concern was expressed by members at the loss of the green

infrastructure data bases that had been compiled by regional development agencies. ID and SL undertook to maintain a watching brief on this initiative **A10**

9. Ecosystem Knowledge Network

ID reported that he had met with Defra's Ecosystem Knowledge Network. The Ecosystems Knowledge Network seeks to promote an ecosystems approach and aims to develop an active membership of people and organisations interested in benefiting from an ecosystems approach and the sharing of information. ID reported the Network had funds and that it might support a greenspace toolkit workshop. ID undertook to try to strengthen links with the Network **A10**

10. Possible UK UNESCO MAB Urban Forum/UK SCOPE Urban Futures Project (Brighton, Bristol, Leicester, Bradford)

ID reported that he had attended the SCOPE Urban Futures meeting in Shanghai where the focus had been on middle size cities of under 1 million inhabitants. ID advised that there was potential for the Forum to become engaged in UK projects, perhaps including studies of the UNESCO Brighton Biosphere Reserve project, Swansea, Dundee, Stirling and comparison studies with Chinese cities such as Wigan/Huabei. It was agreed that ID would seek to move this forward and would try to obtain acceptance by the Royal Society **A11**

11. Forum Chairmanship and Secretariat

ID and NL had advised the Forum of their intention to stand down as Chair and Secretary respectively by the end of 2012. NL reported that he had received three confirmed nominations for the position of Chair of the Forum:

- Ambra Burls, proposed by Richard Scott, seconded by Alison Millward
- Alison Millward, proposed by Joanne Tippett, seconded by Joe Ravetz
- Judy Ling Wong, proposed by David Goode, seconded by George Barker.

It was agreed that each candidate would provide members with a short manifesto by end July 2012 and that voting supervised by an independent teller at NE would take place before end August 2012, with each member of the Forum being asked to indicate their first, second and third choices. SL to provide the e-mail address of the teller as soon as possible. **A12**

It was also agreed that the incoming Chair would propose how best to provide the Secretariat and would report on how to take this forward at the next meeting of the Forum **A13**

12. Membership

Discussion focused on the need to widen the scope of the membership, to think about the structure of the membership, the gender balance, the need to attract young and upcoming people and to allow potential members to observe a meeting of the Forum without commitment. All members to feed into this process **A14**

13. Awards

- a) Black Environmental Network (BEN) was awarded the UK MAB Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence and JLW was presented with the certificate
- b) Wigan Greenheart: NL reported that he and JHan had undertaken the assessment process and felt that whilst the whole of the Wigan Greenheart regeneration project did not fulfil the criteria for the award, Pennington Flash (one of several areas individual within the Greenheart) did. In discussion it

was felt that consideration should be given to the interpretation of the award criteria and to providing guidance on how to potentially recognise large-scale innovative concepts, such as the whole of the Wigan Greenheart. It was agreed that either ID, JHan or NL would communicate with Mark Chapman in this regard **A15**.

It was also agreed to talk to JHan about similar regeneration programmes in St. Helens **A16**

- c) Black Country Living Landscapes Community Involvement Programme was awarded the UK MAB Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence.
- d) Buglife: ID proposed that Buglife be given the UK MAB Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence for brownfield restoration and this was agreed.
- e) Gordon Square (University of London): JLW reported that this is an excellent example of how to manage wildlife in a city square which could provide an example of how people manage city squares in the future. AS undertook to assess **A17**
- f) Bankside Open Spaces Trust, an example of restoration and of progressive vision in volunteer involvement and links to schools in a deprived area of South London, was proposed for the Award and SL and AM undertook to assess **A18**.

14. Work programme and annual report

NL reported that the Annual Report for 2011/12 and the work programme for 2012/13 have been posted on the Forum's web site and AB reported that she would be including a copy with her report to the UK MAB National Committee.

15 Financial report: Secretary

NL reported that the current bank balance (reserves) after payment of outstanding liabilities at 5th April 2012 and including the receipt from UWN of £4,583 was £7,196. NL estimated that current general annual expenditure is running at £1,500- £2,000 per annum and that no additional income had been secured. He pointed out that whilst current funding would enable the Forum to continue to operate for the next 3-4 years, sustainable long-term funding should be secured as soon as possible. PF informed that the Interagency Cooperation (NE, CCW, SNH and NIEA) was keen on keeping the Forum strong and was seeking to leverage some additional funding for the Forum and that CCW would act as lead partner. **A19**

It was agreed that members of the Forum would create records of their time spent on Forum business. ID agreed to prepare a sample spreadsheet **A20**.

NL expressed the Forum's appreciation for the action taken by UWN and also for the continued support in kind from NE and the other Agencies.

16 Any Other Business

1. PF referred to the commitment by the Agencies to support the Forum and the importance that the Forum be a UK and NI body and that more attention should be given to also holding events in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
2. GL pointed out the continued interest in the Forum publication 'Discover Yourself Outside' and NL undertook to obtain a quotation for an additional print run **A21**

17. Dates of future meetings

- Wednesday October 17th at NE, in London
- February 2013 at SNH in Edinburgh (precise date still to arranged).