

The UK-MAB Urban Forum

www.ukmaburbanforum.org.uk

Annual Report 2010/11 and Provisional Work Programme 2011/12



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THE UK-MAB URBAN FORUM

The Urban Forum of the UK Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Committee is a network of specialists, practitioners and thinkers involved with nature conservation in urban areas. Its mission is to raise awareness, stimulate research, influence policy, improve the design and management of urban systems, and push urban biodiversity and nature conservation up the social and political agenda. Its distinctive contribution to this goal is integrated thinking. The Urban Forum tries to reflect and express these specialisms, and the many complex realities they represent. In the breadth of its agenda and the range of its membership, it is unique within the UK.

Members of the Urban Forum come from a wide variety of backgrounds from voluntary organisations to local authorities, government agencies and the private sector: from those primarily concerned with conserving “nature” – plants, wildlife, biodiversity – to those, researchers and practitioners, who work with people and deal with the human use of green space. Currently there are some 27 members who collectively contribute to the continuing reputation of the UK as a centre of excellence in this field. The networking and multi-disciplinary approach which is the hallmark of the Urban Forum is a source of new insights whose promulgation to a wider audience is seen as one of the Forum’s key roles.

The Urban Forum meets four times a year, but much of its work is done through networking and informal sub-groups. In order to maximise the contribution and commitment of its members, all of whom work in a voluntary capacity and have heavy professional workloads of their own, it sets annual work programmes with a strategic framework and realistic targets for delivery.

The Urban Forum was established as a working group in 1988. Its main work has been in publishing papers, preparing comments on national issues and policies, generating new concepts, guidelines and research, organising conferences and workshops, and networking with other expert groups. Some of its work is done in collaboration with other organisations. It also awards the UK-MAB Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence (which includes the MAB logo) to key demonstration projects, initiatives and publications – a process that involves site visits and expert appraisals.

ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11

Activities

- The Forum's symposium 'Do Street Trees Have a Future?' held at UCL, London, on May 12th 2010 with 72 delegates attending.
- The Forum had input into Valleys to Coast (V2C) registered social landlord's green infrastructure strategy.
- The Forum's archives have now been organised and codified by University of Aberystwyth
- The Forum responded to the consultation process in advance of Defra's Natural Environment White Paper
- The Routledge Handbook on Urban Ecology, edited by Forum members Ian Douglas and David Goode, with many contributions by other Forum members, was published by Routledge on December 20th 2010.

Awards

- Roots and Shoots, a London wildlife garden and youth training centre, was awarded the Forum's UK MAB Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence.
- Chorlton Water Park, Manchester, was re-assessed for the UK MAB Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence, based on changes since 1998.

Meetings

- Regular meetings of the Forum were held on 11th May 2010 (UCL, London), September 22nd 2010 (SNH, Edinburgh) and on 26th January 2011 (NE, London).
- Ian Douglas attended the Symposium on Urban Futures in Shanghai in October 2010 at the invitation of SCOPE, CAS and UNESCO
- Nigel Lawson attended the visit of the Natural Environment White Paper Ministerial Advisory Panel to the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) and Trafford MBC.

Presentations to Forum meetings

- Judy Ling Wong on multicultural participation in the 21st Century to the Forum

Membership

Membership of the Forum was restructured into three categories: Fellows, Members recruited for a 5 year period and Representatives. John Box, Gerald Dawe, Ian Douglas, Peter Frost and David Goode became the Forum's first Fellows. In addition, past members Grant Luscombe, Peter Shirley and George Barker accepted the Forum's invitation to become Fellows of the Forum.

In September, Gerald Dawe stood down as Chair of the Forum due to pressure of work resulting from his position as a Herefordshire County Councillor and other duties. Ian Douglas, a past Chair of the Forum, succeeded him as Chair of the Forum.

New Members

The Forum is delighted to welcome the following new members Richard Scott (Landlife), Scott Ferguson (SNH), Samantha Lyme (NE) and Terry Robinson (formerly of the Countryside Commission and NE).

Resignations

The Forum has, with regret, accepted the resignation of Ian Angus who has left SNH and of Grant Luscombe who has stood down as a member of the Forum but has accepted the Forum's invitation to become a fellow of the Forum.

Financial Statement to year ending 5th April 2011

The income of the Forum from its traditional funders (NE, CCW, SNH and NIER) has been drastically reduced due to cut-backs. Consequently, meetings were reduced to 3 and the Secretariat was initially reduced and, since September 2010, run on an honorary basis.

Expenditure:

General expenditure of the Forum to year ending 5th April 2011 to cover the Forum's core work
(Cost of meetings of the Forum, members travel expenses in attending meetings of the Forum which could not be recovered elsewhere, maintaining the secretariat (until September 2010) and maintaining the web site

£ 1,963.00

Non-recurring expenditure items:

- Archives £ 450.00
- Printing and distributing 'Discover Yourself Outside' £ 1,055.00
- **Total expenditure** **£ 3,468.00**

Income:

From funders £ 2,000.00
Do Street Trees have a Future conference (net profit) £ 1,528.00
Total income **£ 3,528.00**

Reserves:

Bank balance at 5th April 2010: £ 3,780.00
Minus outstanding liabilities (estimated £300 travel expenses owed to a member and £250 for production of award plaques): £ 550.00
Total reserves **£ 3,230.00**

At the time of writing this report, secured income from the Forum's funders to year ending 5th April 2012 is only £500.00. However, some traditional funders have indicated their willingness to provide benefits in kind such as hosting meetings of the Forum.

2011/2012 Provisional Work Programme

Core Work

| Topic | Project | Targets |
|--|---|--|
| Scientific | Science related work and outputs | Guidance documents; publications; organising conferences/seminars; attending conferences; participation in consultation processes; etcetera. |
| MAB Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence | Developing the Award | Awards to appropriate urban nature reserves and individuals. Reviewing existing awarded sites. |
| Contributing to MAB | UK MAB committee | Ensure Forum liaises effectively with parent committee. |
| Urban Biosphere | Applying the Biosphere Reserve concept to urban areas | To report progress from the UK on the application of the Biosphere Reserve concept to human settlements and to collaborate internationally on the achievement of target 23.1 from the UNESCO MAB Madrid Action Plan: To facilitate the integration of urban areas into Biosphere Reserves. |
| The Urban Forum website | Development and maintenance | To ensure the website acts as an effective means to communicate the Forum's work to interested parties |
| Maintaining the Urban Forum's financial security | | To secure sufficient funds for the Forum's core costs and ensure funds are secured to implement work programme projects. |
| Membership of the Urban Forum | Attracting appropriate nominees to the Forum | To ensure that the Forum membership continues to be represented by top specialists and continues to reflect and express current thinking and the state of the art in nature conservation in urban areas. Annual review of the membership structure by the membership committee. |
| Topic | Project | Targets |

Forum Projects (prospective, new and current work)

| Topic | Project | Principal participants | Targets | Progress as at April 2011 |
|--|---|--|---|--|
| Greenspace Toolbox | To create a "Toolbox" filled with 6 "Toolkits": Urban Greenspace (which exists at present in two versions the CCW, and the NE Accessible Natural developed under contract by John Handley's team at CURE); Stress (including noise and light pollution); Street Trees; Air Quality; Heat Islands; Flooding and Urban Water Management | Pete Frost, Ian Douglas, Ambra Burls, Graham Leekes and Nigel Lawson | To identify the gaps in the provision of toolkits, to identify where the provision of toolkits is both possible and desirable and to develop and distribute the toolkits. | Two sub-groups have been formed to investigate how to progress the development of guidance on green infrastructure (AM, AB, JH and SL) and on flood/water (GLE, ID and NL) |
| All-Party Parliamentary groups interested in urban green-space. | To target key groups with details of the Forum's outputs such as Discover Yourself Outside or the Handbook on Urban Ecology and to offer comment and/or presentations on specific issues. | All members | To write to all secretaries of key groups to raise awareness of the Forum's work and that all Forum members should consider how and where to make an intervention | ID and NL have commenced work on a brochure describing the Forum and its work. |
| Textbook on Urban Ecology | Following publication of the Handbook on Urban Ecology, Taylor and Francis have asked ID about a Textbook on Urban Ecology | Ian Douglas and Philip James | To edit a textbook on urban ecology | ID and PJ are in discussing how to take this forward. |
| London Wildlife Trust 30 th Anniversary and "Wildlife Expo" | London Wildlife Trust will be seeking to mark its 30th anniversary with a seminar, probably in October 2011, to consider what has happened over the last 30 years and what might happen over the coming 30 years and that the Trust would be seeking partners. He | Mathew Frith and Ian Douglas | To have an active participation in the seminar. To have a presence in the proposed Wildlife Expo. | MF and ID to liaise on how the Forum might collaborate with London Wildlife Trust in these events |

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| | also informed members of a planned weekend "Wildlife Expo" event at Alexander Palace. | | | |
| City People and the Nation's Forests | Forum briefing paper emphasising that woodland places like Hampstead Heath, Epping Forest, the Wield of Kent, Red Rose Forest, Delamere Forest and those of the Peak District and Lake District are of as much importance to the people of the urban conurbations such as London and Manchester as they are to the people living in their immediate proximity. | Ian Douglas, David Goode, Philip James, John Handley , | To prepare and distribute a guidance document. | DG has established that Ted Trzyna would be interested in such a review. |
| Training Sessions for RTPI | To undertake a training session for RTPI to raise awareness of green infrastructure in respect of adaptation strategies to climate change. | Alison Millward, Ambra Burls and Joanne Tippet | For RTPI to raise awareness of green infrastructure in respect of adaptation strategies to climate change | AM and AB are devising an appropriate training module. JT agreed to provide input into this process. |
| 'Planet Under Pressure'. International Conference, London, 26-29 March 2012 | | Ian Douglas, David Goode and others. | To organise a session at the conference and for members to actively participate in the session. | ID has responded to the call for sessions with a proposal that the Forum host an international session with partners, from SCOPE and the Society for Human Ecology, on <i>urban ecosystem services, sustainable futures and human well-being</i> . |
| MAB Urban Wildlife Award for Excellence | Awarding suitable sites/projects. | Members | To complete the assessments of nominated sites. | Assessment of the applications by <i>Wigan Greenheart</i> is ongoing. The <i>Lagoons at Fiddler's Ferry power station</i> will be investigated for their potential suitability. |
| Topic | Project | Principal participants | Targets | Progress as at September 2009 |