

Greener Cities

Closing the gap between policy and practice

Report of the Conference held 24 February 2005

Compiled by the Urban Wildlife Network

The Urban Wildlife Network thanks everyone who helped with the Conference, whether beforehand, on the day, or dealing with the outcomes. This includes the funders, speakers, workshop facilitators and reporters, the staff at Urbis, and people at the Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country and at Coventry City Council. Special mention must be made of Wendy Burnett, the Conference Administrator, Michelle Bennett, UWN's Secretary, Malcolm Barton at Groundwork, Deborah Fox at CABI Space, and Kim Paterson and Chris Calvert at the Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside.

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Introduction and Background

The last five years have seen a new recognition, particularly by policy-makers, of the value of green space in making cities sustainable. Urban green space can be the catalyst for a wide range of regeneration activity, from community health projects to social enterprises. The conference considered the future for green space and its potential to benefit the communities of our towns and cities, as well as being valuable for urban biodiversity.

An underlying fundamental question was ‘But what sort of “green” are we talking about – and if brown fields are still being earmarked for development how much real progress have we made?’ We looked too at the future of people-friendly nature in cities in the light of current thinking and initiatives. There was also the launch of the Urban Wildlife Network, formerly the Urban Wildlife Partnership, as a new campaigning body.

The event showcased some current approaches being employed by four leading players in this field, each valuable in its own right, but collectively having the potential for a step change towards achieving wildlife-rich ecologically functioning towns and cities. Delegates were given the opportunity to challenge these, and identify how they can be integrated and supported.

The objectives were to:

- Record the collective key messages from participants about how nature conservation contributes to delivering government policies for urban regeneration, and improving people’s quality of life in towns and cities.
- Capture those key messages to use them in influencing both policy making and policy delivery directed at sustained improvement of towns and cities.
- Highlight successful approaches and opportunities for, and solutions to, overcoming barriers to integrating green space projects into regeneration in ways that meet the needs of communities and wildlife whilst improving the urban environment.
- Develop a dialogue about the issues of long-term management of sites, projects and programmes.

Plenary Presentations

Chris Baines Urban Wildlife Network (UWN) President welcomed delegates to what he said was an important event, bringing together as it did four well respected organisations all dealing with urban greenspaces in different, but complementary ways. His presentation reminded everyone of the beauty of wildlife in towns and cities and the fun people (especially young people) get from easily accessible and high quality open spaces. The assembled company certainly had fun looking at Chris's picture of a fox cadging a lift on the back of a huntsman's horse!

David Nicholson-Lord for UWN discussed how the reality of the green cities agenda matches up to the rhetoric, where the gaps are and what steps we could take to ensure there is a closer fit. Broader social, cultural and political factors, not least definitions of sustainability, lie behind the debate about wildlife and biodiversity in urban areas. These need to be thought through if we are serious about making cities liveable and reconnecting people with nature.

Nigel Doar for the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts outlined the Sheffield Wildlife Trust's pioneering approach to delivering health, learning, social inclusion, recreation, biodiversity and economic benefits through the regeneration, management and use of green spaces. The development and delivery of community-led integrated neighbourhood environment plans is now at the heart of their work across a large part of one of England's five biggest cities, and the approach is increasingly being recognised as a promising way forward - across Sheffield and beyond.

Malcolm Barton for the Groundwork Foundation suggested that the title for the Conference implies that in reality a gap does exist between policy and practice. He agreed with this premise and explained, through reference to case studies, the ways in which Groundwork attempts to 'close the gap'. He explained how tactically Groundwork tries to 'sell' nature conservation in such a way that it can be seen to deliver 'liveability'. Drawing on recent work he went on to examine some of the impediments confronted by those trying to deliver greener cities and used this as a means of offering questions to be used in the Groundwork workshops.

Deborah Fox for CABI Space outlined commitment to biodiversity in urban green spaces, whether in established parks or new spaces. Issues explored included how grounds maintenance contracts can ensure great beginnings are not spoiled by poor management, and how planned housing growth and market renewal reflect the need for green infrastructure.

Workshop Report - CABE Space

Based on some of the issues raised in the presentations, the first workshop looked at overcoming barriers to achieving step changes. The second workshop added comments to the outcomes of the first workshop.

First Workshop

1. Since CABE Space and others gather so much good practice and produce rafts of publications, if there is so much good practice and it is available, why is there still bad practice?
2. How can we overcome perceived barriers and gain a common understanding of which barriers are fig leaves?

Second Workshop

3. How can we ensure that new good practice is suitably captured for feedback up to policy makers to show them that policy is actually being implemented?
4. Who does CABE Space need to influence?

Barriers

- Community expectations.
- Demographics.
- Low aspirations.
- Fear.
- Lack of funding.
- Skills: different standards; training policies.
- Design and maintenance.
- Decision-making, especially complicated decision-making networks.
- The perceived conflict between clean and tidy or wildlife rich open space.
- Fear of litigation – fewer school visits.
- Professional expectations - regeneration professionals not expecting to encompass biodiversity.
- Over-prescriptive approaches.
- Introverted sector.
- Ownership and responsibilities.

Overcoming barriers

- Influence the media, they often lead campaigns.
- Reach a wider audience than the usual suspects.
- Think long-term.
- Educate schools, for example through Eco-school visits and junior rangers schemes.
- Avoid 'consultation fatigue'.
- Communicate better – professionals must explain plans.
- Develop and implement training policy.
- Improve marketing and use its techniques to change people's perceptions.
- Influence and inspire councillors – encourage ring-fencing of resources.
- Repackage wildlife professionals' desires, for example the need for dead timber is compromised by fears about risks and safety.

- Break out of the nature reserves mentality.
- Encourage the use of Supplementary Planning Guidance, allowing local authorities more input and developing a more flexible approach.
- Use fresh ideas for children and young people to gain a sense of community ownership.
- Tackle socio-economic barriers, offer mutual space and be sensitive to social justice issues.

The second workshop highlighted the overriding theme of quality. Each issue raised demands a high quality approach in relation to all factors, for example, people's expectations. These can be influenced in an individual community by showing the people concerned good work elsewhere.

Capturing Good Practice

- Sell ourselves better.
- Develop better branding / headlines.
- Use tools of recognition, for example Green Flag Awards.
- Use a collective voice and promote success stories such as National Tree Week.
- Use CABI Space and others' publications.
- Have a database of projects, perhaps available through websites to enable networking, for example the Wildlife Trusts' website.
- Encourage new people in to gain fresh perspectives.
- Use 'champions'.
- Ensure investment in such things as marketing skills and fundraising as well as conservation.
- Invest in staff.
- Look at fundraising from elsewhere, for example the Association for Public Service Excellence awards in America.
- Skill the decision makers.

Influencing

- Park managers, future park managers and landscape architects

These professionals need to understand the links between landscape design and management and the different types of green space. There may be a need for new training and skills development programmes, perhaps leading to certification of national standards. This in turn could influence levels of pay. Park managers are also in a position to link up the work of others and to influence leisure courses.

- Planners

We need to engage with planners, including local transport planners at all levels, to help them to integrate provision for green space in their work and training.

- Others

Local Education Authorities: Engaging with LEAs and schools to embed biodiversity in the curriculum.

Chief executives and lead members.

Regional Development Agencies.

Health Sector.

Politicians.

Developers.

Workshop Report - Groundwork

These workshops looked at linking regeneration activities to nature conservation. In both cases delegates were asked whether they agreed with the premise embedded in the Conference title that a gap did exist between policy and practice. They unanimously agreed that this is the case.

First Workshop

The participants were a representative cross-section of people involved in creating, developing and maintaining green infrastructure. Their interests covered a broad range of green infrastructure typologies, including parks maintenance, play areas and Local Nature Reserves.

The main points of the discussions in Workshop 1 were as follows.

I. General

- Funding streams dry up and change constantly.
- Assembling a complex 'basket' of funding was the general experience, and it was agreed that a variety of funding streams at a modest scale can be beneficial. One delegate reported assembling £70,000 from as many as 7 different funding streams.
- Even local authorities now need to employ officers to assemble funding using the 'basket' approach.
- Section 106 agreements provide some benefits but also present several impediments. This type of funding is not likely to provide a major solution.
- Local authority maintenance budgets for parks can be very transient.
- Long-term strategies can be very positive in helping to justify the need for stable funding streams and also provide the means to use short term funding packages in a strategically sensible way.
- Over recent years we have flipped from large monopoly structures (local authorities) to excessive distribution of effort through a disparate array of funding sources – some middle route is optimal and desirable.
- Strategic green infrastructure can provide economies of scale to support projects.

2. Long-term maintenance:

- A continuing problem is that the majority of funders do not fund revenue expenditure.
- Voluntary organisations' membership income can help provide core funding, some of which may be used for revenue funding.
- It is sometimes possible to use capital funding for what would normally be revenue funded activity.
- The intermediate labour market can be a positive help.
- Awards (Green Flag etc) can provide positive help. Losing an award can stimulate organisations to try to regain their status. However, awards can have a detrimental effect – starving less attractive projects of resources simply because they have little chance of an award. Also the novelty value of awards diminishes over time.

Workshop Two:

Workshop two used the results from the first workshop as a starting point for discussion.

The main findings were:

- Funding opportunities for green infrastructure are not evenly spread.
- Political drivers can skew local funding away from areas of need.
- An observation offered by one delegate was that Royal Parks have lost 70% of their funding over 10 years, highlighting the need to seek funding from further afield.
- The pot for green infrastructure is shrinking constantly – less is coming through to support environmental projects.
- Organisations spend an inordinate amount of time assembling funding
- There is an important absence of a mention of green infrastructure in regional spatial strategies. The Regional Economic Strategy for the East of England however does give green infrastructure a good degree of profile.
- Local and national policies relating to green infrastructure appear to confirm a reasonable understanding. The gap predominantly exists at a regional level, although there are exceptions – one being the East of England.
- There is a need for a national 'green coalition'. A delegate cited the success in the East of England as evidence of how green infrastructure can be brought to the fore if an agenda is pursued in a coordinated fashion.
- If long-term maintenance is not provided then habitat loss through destruction can be the result. Should maintenance be the real issue or should the amount of green infrastructure delivered be the issue?
- Constrained funding leads to unwelcome outcomes such as bland landscapes and contract gang mowing.
- Green infrastructure provision and maintenance needs to be added to the list of indicators on a local authority's Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

Key Messages from Groundwork workshops

- 'Basket funding' seems to be prevalent. A range of fund-holding partners can offer positive benefits but the workshop delegates generally held the view that the pendulum has swung to the extreme, where inefficiencies occur and worthy projects fail to launch because of extended timescales in assembling sufficient funds.
- Revenue funding is required to support long-term maintenance.
- Section 106 agreements were reported as providing some useful, if limited sources of funding for longer-term maintenance. Section 106 agreements as a source of funding were contingent on the granting of some form of planning development. This often required there to be a commercial development associated with the agreement so in a sense this type of funding is market led and geographically limited.
- Awards were generally thought to be a good thing on balance because of the benefits of increased public awareness. However, views were held that awards could sometimes cause unintentional damage due to resources being diverted to flagship projects offering the best chance of obtaining an award.

- There is a need for some system of carrying out green infrastructure audits so that the asset base can be monitored and evaluated. The National Parks Service in the USA performs these audits with some success.
- There is a need for a 'Green coalition' to provide a coordinated voice to Government and other policymakers, stakeholders and fund-holders.
- A gap exists between national and local policies. At these levels there appears to be a reasonable understanding and advocacy for green infrastructure. The problem seems to exist at a regional level where there is a strong need for Green Infrastructure to be valued and incorporated as a strategic part of regional economic and spatial planning.*
- Comprehensive Performance Assessments should be used to monitor local authorities' delivery of green infrastructure.

*There have been several developments in relation to this point since the conference. Two or three regions are known to be making bids through the Sustainable Communities programme to fund strategic green infrastructure work. In addition bids for green infrastructure are likely to be made to the four hundred million pounds extra funding recently announced for the three growth areas (Milton Keynes, The Thames Gateway and Ashworth).

Workshop Report - Urban Wildlife Network

First Workshop

The principal questions used to stimulate discussion were: 'Who are we, and what do we represent?'

Several themes and related issues were identified as important, and it was thought that UWN should be addressing them. They included the urban/rural divide which still exists and which needs breaking down. The UWN needs to find out what is happening where, how appropriate various activities are, and what partnerships and funding streams are involved. It was agreed that it is important to look at objectives set by, for example, the economic and social sectors, and to see how we can conform to those whilst promoting nature conservation as an aid to their realisation.

The issues raised included:

- Specifications and criteria – should we be more or less prescriptive in relation to the natural environment and its role in improving quality of life?
- Desirable outputs and outcomes - should we encourage or develop an agreed list that could be adapted for local use?
- Integrating government biodiversity policy with local and regional work on ecological networks and green infrastructure projects.

Questions were also raised as to what UWN's relationship should be with agencies like CABI Space and Natural England. Should it use its independence to promote unorthodox ideas and solutions, or to comment upon the policies and other work of these and other agencies, or to lobby them? Or perhaps its functions would be combinations of these and other roles according to circumstances and opportunities. It is important not to be seen as yet another nature conservation group promoting a narrow and perhaps out of date message, and by so doing adding to the perceptions of some that the whole sector is disparate and behind the times.

There was agreement that we still have to prove and demonstrate things to unsympathetic audiences, even if to us it is sometimes proving the obvious. We may or may not need more evidence (see feedback from the plenary session) but that which we have has to be used in conjunction with that from other sectors, not used in isolation. We should have the confidence to advocate what we know to be good and effective, to show successes which demonstrate this, and to be bold about significant issues. We have to make key people familiar with our agenda, perhaps through biodiversity champions promoting effective messages. This would start to 'Close the Gap'.

It was agreed that one area which has great potential for us is health. This country has been much slower than the USA in accepting the evidence on the health benefits of accessible and high quality green spaces. Imaginative thinking is required to link into the 'prevention is better than cure' approach to healthy living and the economic benefits to the country in general and the health service in particular of a generally healthier population.

Finally there was discussion on not just devising effective messages, but on ways of delivering these, such as on-line services and resources. In this context personal experiences were thought to be very important, both for framing the messages and for passing on skills. Many strategic and policy documents, such as regional strategies, need more certainty to support their environmental aspirations.

Second Workshop

Workshop two began by looking at the issues raised in workshop one and asking what other issues were important. The list included:

- Knowing how much effort to put into what are often small biodiversity-rich urban sites.
- High levels of vandalism in many urban green spaces.
- Joined up promotion of health benefits.
- Practitioners rarely being promoted to become decision makers, and therefore always having to re-convince the top people.
- Lack of funding for routine maintenance once the initial project has been undertaken*.
- Lack of co-ordination regarding biodiversity, both within local authorities and nationally.
- Trying to squeeze big community use into very small spaces.
- A feeling that managing for biodiversity compromises public safety*.
- The difficulty of building sustainability into projects involving small local groups*.
- The lack of a national strategy for linking green spaces via green corridors, and therefore no funding streams for this. We need someone who will look at a national 'ecological network'.
- A continuing feeling of isolation amongst local environment groups.
- The gap between ideals (fostered in students via lectures) and what can be achieved in the real, hard world.
- The continuing lack of understanding of the value of biodiversity.
- Insufficient promotion for green roof projects.
- Local Nature Reserves being undervalued.
- People's perception that wildlife is useless and untidy in their local spaces.
- Wildlife Trusts feeling obliged to take on land, perhaps for species protection, but without being given adequate resources for management, or to address the 'public perception' barrier.

* Raised by more than one participant.

Solutions/Ways Forward For UWN

- Education (of local communities and site users) is essential – we need to access funding for this.
- UWN could publicise the facts about safety on 'wild' sites - most fears are perceived not real.
- A lot of this fear is culturally ingrained (you are a bad parent if you let your child play outside). Sedentary lifestyles mean we have forgotten how to enjoy the outside world. We need to re-educate the public.
- We need to reintroduce the idea of 'fear for fun' - some risks are not only acceptable but can be very enjoyable.
- Need to encourage a common sense approach to risk, helped by Government Guidance*.

- As a movement we need to be proactive – try to ensure that the good publicity outweighs the bad.
- UWN should lobby the case at ALL levels for revenue funding, promoting the revenue benefits of urban green space in terms of health, reduced energy costs, and ecosystem services.

*UWN needs to find ways, perhaps through central Government, to reverse the litigation culture. Government could issue guidelines on what constitutes an acceptable risk, so that the fear of litigation can be removed. (To prevent, for example, schools removing wildlife ponds because they are deemed to represent a drowning hazard.) It is the Government's responsibility to promote a more common sense approach.

General points

- Use Local groups such as 'Friends Of' to sustain funding.
- Projects should use signage similar to that on car parks, such as 'at own risk' disclaimers, to discourage trivial claims, such as a recent one for a burst basketball!
- Publicity campaigns can be effective, and might include visits to sites and events on sites.
- Green spaces need clear boundaries, for instance mown boundaries, to allow safe walking and give clear indications of access.
- Good interpretation is essential.

Summary

- UWN and CABI Space need to lobby for improved funding streams.
- They need to act as a conduit for joining up good practice.
- They need to publicise good practice and use it as a lobbying tool.
- With partners they need to run a national advertising campaign highlighting the benefits of biodiversity and the outdoors.

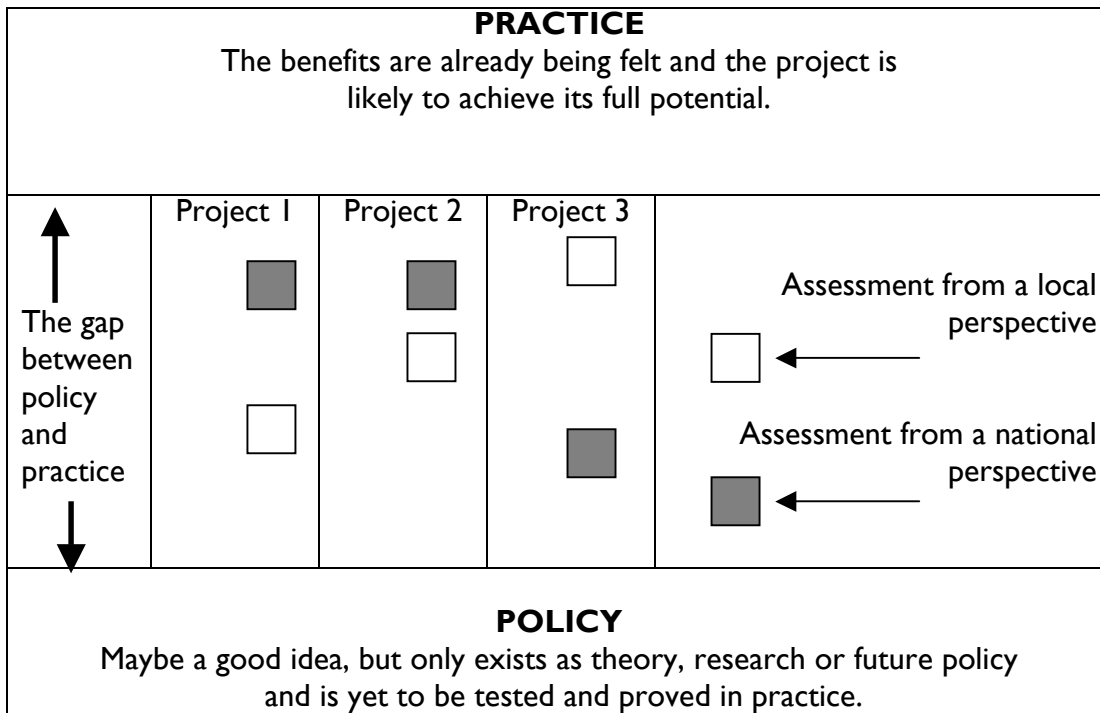
Workshop Report - The Wildlife Trusts

The workshop ran over two sessions with separate groups of people. The objectives were to:

- i) Think about where projects and initiatives are in terms of the gap between policy and practice.
- ii) Share ideas and collect key messages on how projects can achieve their full potential.

First Workshop

The first group looked at how some current environmental and nature conservation projects, programmes and initiatives contribute towards regeneration themes. (The themes were taken from a current SRB 6 bid in Bolton.) The projects were assessed from both a national and local perspective, and consideration was given as to where they sat on a scale representing the gap between policy and practice. The participants' judgements were represented on a chart as shown below.



In addition various types of project were linked to the regeneration themes as shown below. (This is indicative only: some projects could have been linked to more than one theme, and with more time participants would have been able to place more projects within the themes.)

Regeneration Themes	Types of project that have been delivered through nature conservation / environmental initiatives.			
Improving Local Services	Operation spring clean	Door Step Recycling initiatives		
Joined-up Action	Landscape and Management Team. (Training for young people, leading to employment)			
Building a Future for Children and Young People	Young People's Environmental projects.			
Access to Work	Environmental Task Force			
Building a Sustainable Community	Housing Market Renewal Initiative		Doorstep Greens	
Changing the Image of an Area.	Green Streets. Community Forest			
Other	City Greenways (conservation volunteering projects)	School Grounds projects	Community Involvement through urban biodiversity action plans	Forest project community involvement.

Second Workshop

The second group considered what factors could move projects up the board and what barriers prevented this. (For this exercise the projects were considered from a national perspective.) The most common suggestions for increasing the potential reach were as follows. (The suggestions have been ordered into the types of projects for which they were originally made, but many can be applied generically.)

School Grounds

- Promote best practice through case studies.
- Use long-term unemployed to teach children.
- Celebrity endorsement.

Children and Young People

- Link things to policy e.g. education work, national curriculum.
- Lobby decision makers at a strategic level.

Community involvement through urban biodiversity

- Publicity and marketing for projects very important, as is raising public awareness.
- Commitment from landowners.
- Funding to involve the community.

Doorstep Recycling Scheme

- Advertise which local authority does it best, make it a point of civic pride.
- Look at rewards for households such as vouchers for council services or reduced council tax.

Community Forests

- Link with other initiatives, make partnerships.

Doorstep Greens

- Increase national publicity.
- Link up and work with existing local groups.
- Make the policy and funding more user friendly.

Forest Project

- Training.
- Woodland products.

Summary

In the first exercise the participants generated many different examples of projects that made a positive contribution to the different regeneration themes, demonstrating that nature conservation and environmental projects can play a significant role in the regeneration of urban areas. The exercise was sometimes difficult due to a lack of knowledge about what was already happening at a national level. This suggests that for some schemes either little is happening on a national scale, or it is not promoted enough to be picked up by the delegates, or some combination of the two.

Key suggestions from the second session included more publicity, sharing of best practice, and networking. The need to resource and fund projects adequately was restated, as was the need to lobby and influence policy to be more 'user friendly' in order to aid success.

Feedback from Final Plenary Session

Urban Wildlife Network

- Maybe UWN could 'scrutinise' CABE Space, and whether the Government is integrating its various policy and activities strands.
- UWN should develop working relationships with Greenspace and CABE Space.
- Ideas now need marketing; we do not need to gather any more evidence, there is enough.
- UWN should concentrate on education, signposting and interpretation.
- Work needed on risk and safety issues, including changes to the law on compensation.
- UWN should be the sounding board, filter and notice board.

The Wildlife Trusts

- Local successes are not being translated to national acceptance.
- Need to move awareness of projects 'up' the policy and resources agenda through better publicity, information and dissemination of best practice.
- More capacity is needed for lobbying, networking and influencing.

Groundwork

- There is a wide range of green space projects which need developing and maintaining.
- Whilst 'baskets' of funding will probably always be needed, we do need dedicated funding for green infrastructure.
- Why is the need for revenue funding still not understood?
- We should look at asset-based management as practised in the USA.
- National and regional policy should inform local action, the East Midlands is a good example.
- Awards schemes are helpful.
- Comprehensive Performance Assessment should include green infrastructure.

CABE Space

- There is a dilemma about community expectations, we may be too prescriptive.
- We need to influence the media, partly by using tried and tested marketing tools.
- We need to be able to demonstrate to, and show, people what they could have.
- Movers and shakers (especially local councillors) need to be influenced.
- Better links need to be made between design and maintenance.
- Important to influence regional development agencies.

General

- Nature has the right to be natural.
- We are all helping people to value the natural environment.
- We are stuck with having to 'measure it to justify it'.
- We must influence new audiences, create demand and raise aspirations.
- Why is there any bad practice?
- Our futures lie increasingly in the modern city.

CONCLUSIONS

A number of clear concerns, common experiences and mutual angst emerged. Overall there was a recognition that most people want towns and cities to be better places, contributing to improving people's quality of life, and performing their functions better. The nature conservation sector however cannot always convince others that the natural environment has a key role in achieving this. It is as if there is a 'glass wall' beyond which we cannot go. On our side of it there are numerous projects and programmes, many skilled and dedicated people and much good practice. On the other side the world goes about its business as usual, with scarcely a nod in our direction.

There are exceptions, such as the Sheffield Wildlife Trust's work with local communities, bringing nature conservation and other environmental themes into mainstream urban regeneration, and the work of other Wildlife Trusts, Groundwork Trusts and a myriad of small groups. Much of this activity however remains on the fringes of wider work in the social and economic fields. Its funding is often short-term, its benefits not widely enough recognised and its proponents isolated. The presence of CAGE Space does though help to address this problem in the public policy arena.

Other strong points to emerge during the day were:

- The gap between policy and practice is very real – politicians and their purse-holders do not 'walk the talk'.
- Even so we can provide many examples of good practice, experienced people and standards and awards (such as Green Flag).
- There are plenty of drivers for integrating effective provision and management of the natural environment into wider economic and social initiatives. These include climate change, health, education and sustainable economic development.
- We need to knit all of these things together and champion the philosophy, the techniques and the resourcing which will enable action to be taken.
- We have to promote broad messages of relevance to other interests, such as the health and regeneration fields, not limit ourselves to narrow biodiversity interests.
- There are many barriers to progress. Social barriers include deprivation, skills shortages, low aspirations and risk-aversion. Economic barriers include poor perceptions of value (as opposed to costs) externalising environmental costs and the difficulties of funding public goods rather than private profits.
- The biodiversity sector itself can raise barriers, such as over prescriptive approaches, introspection, and focus on factors not understood by, or relevant to, local communities.
- We need a more marketing oriented approach at all levels – policy, resourcing and community engagement. We need to start from what is important to those who can help us, identifying the benefits to them and then working for nature conservation objectives.
- There is a need to strengthen and develop professional training, recognition and status, and career structures.
- Funding is, and is likely to remain, complex and uncertain. The policy and funding framework is always changing. Sound strategies and inspiring visions should be the constants which help us in this difficult field. Even so revenue funding and support may be, and may remain, the biggest single problem.
- A national 'green coalition' is needed.
- Developing ideas on green infrastructure may help to address isolation, whether of sites and projects, individual community and voluntary groups, or advocates and other practitioners.

THE FUTURE FOR THE URBAN WILDLIFE NETWORK

In developing their ideas for the future of the Network the trustees have been seeking a practical way forward commensurate with the combination of our limited resources and the well recognised need for an organisation focusing solely upon nature conservation in towns and cities. There is no other such body; if the Network did not exist some would feel moved to invent something like it.

The Conference demonstrated that there is wealth of experience and expertise in the field. Throughout the United Kingdom enthusiasm, initiatives and projects abound – often, it seems, in spite of officialdom and authority rather than because of it. As was said in the Network's Annual Report last year, despite all the good work being done 'Even so species remain threatened, sites and habitats are trashed and the regeneration steamroller is but rarely diverted to help'. The conclusion was reached some time ago however, and reinforced by conference delegates, that grass-roots support and advice is more readily available locally, and more easily delivered at that level, than through an under-resourced national organisation.

On the other hand there is an urgent need to establish or maintain dialogue, and build relationships with, government departments, organisations such as CABI Space, regeneration practitioners and specialist media. Through this the work of many community groups and enlightened organisations can be showcased, the benefits of mainstreaming that work can be demonstrated, and supporting policies and funding can be advocated.

It is these functions which the Network now sees as its main role. It will act as an advocate, publicist and think-tank for everyone involved in urban nature conservation. It has already secured the funds for the establishment and development of a web-site (and thanks to English Nature for their support for this). It will continue to organise events such as this Conference, and it will take every opportunity to influence national, regional and local Government, industry and commerce, and indeed the rest of the nature conservation sector. The Network will help everyone to understand and appreciate the wildlife of towns and cities, the benefits brought by healthy and well-functioning ecosystems, and the contribution wildlife makes to everyone's quality of life.

Our principal activities will be linked to the four main objectives in the current Development Plan, which are to:

- Facilitate the dissemination of ideas, information, and experiences about urban wildlife.
- Promote initiatives which further nature conservation in urban areas in the United Kingdom.
- Provide a forum for organizations working to create a better future for wildlife and people in towns and cities.
- Undertake, finance or promote research.

The Network has a unique role to play in the processes of creating an 'urban renaissance' in 21st century Britain. Others will be more involved in policy-making, securing resources and delivering outputs and outcomes. The Network will encourage, monitor and comment upon those activities in independent, challenging, but always supportive, ways.

Peter Shirley, Chair, Urban Wildlife Network
February 2005

Appendices

URBAN WILDLIFE NETWORK - A PROFILE (included in delegates' packs)

First there was the Fairbrother Group, a small group of like-minded people intent on raising the flag for nature conservation in towns and cities. Then there was the Urban Wildlife Partnership, an organisation with staff and a busy programme of support for communities throughout the UK. Now there is the Urban Wildlife Network, a small group of like-minded people intent on raising the flag for nature conservation in towns and cities.....

The Fairbrother Group, which was formed in 1987, was named for Nan Fairbrother. Her seminal book 'New Lives New Landscapes' inspired a generation of conservationists, landscape professionals and what we now call urbanists. Nan's main messages concerned the need to reflect the profound changes in the way most people live by making places and spaces for nature in towns and cities. This focus on the social benefits of urban wildlife coincided with increasing recognition within the nature conservation movement itself, that its work on conserving wildlife is as relevant in towns and suburbs as in the more traditional rural and remote areas.

The Urban Wildlife Partnership thrived under the patronage of the Wildlife Trusts. It campaigned, gave advice and support, published guidance and information, organised meetings and conferences, and helped hundreds of local urban wildlife groups in developing both the theory and practice of nature conservation in urban areas. As well as those groups its membership included larger organisations such as Wildlife Trusts, Groundwork Trusts, Landlife and the National Wildflower Centre, community forests and local authorities. Successes included developing guidelines for creative conservation, securing changes to derelict land policies and helping people to realise their ambitions and aspirations for their local wildlife and treasured green spaces.

In some respects everything is better for wildlife in towns and cities than it was 18 years ago. In others it is much worse. There are certainly more people and groups active in the field (or should that be suburb?) There are more organisations, partnerships, programmes, plans and policies favouring wildlife, and people have more fun looking after that wildlife. Even so species remain threatened, sites and habitats are trashed and the regeneration steamroller is but rarely diverted to help.

People and organisations move on, evolve indeed, and the needs of those being supported change, as do the means of delivering that support. The Network is still in transition from what it was to what it will become. This Conference both continues the tradition of organising such events and is part of the transition process. We need your ideas and input to our thinking about an effective structure, membership arrangements, and how best to network amongst the doers and thinkers engaged in nature conservation in towns and cities. How can we effectively involve and inform those whose primary pursuits may be regeneration, community development, environmental protection or building sustainable communities, but whose activities are of critical importance to the natural environment and most people's daily experience of that environment?

We have prepared the ground with organisational changes (see over). We have reviewed current work by others, such as CABI Space and Greenspace. Our view is that the Network remains the only organisation solely dedicated to promoting nature conservation in towns and cities. It is also completely independent. As well as Nan Fairbrother's ideas we have those of others prominent in this field, such as our President, Chris Baines, and David Nicholson-Lord (one of today's speakers) who has recently published a 'Manifesto for Green Cities'. We believe that we should now focus on advocacy, encouragement and strategic activities such as organising events like this. In particular we see a need to:

- Develop a common agenda amongst major players.
- Identify how to link various organisations' activities towards achieving common goals.
- Ensure fundamental issues are identified and addressed.
- Highlight the natural environment's contribution to sustainable communities.

- Be a 'critical friend' to major players in the urban regeneration field.

Your views on our future structure and direction will be valuable and much appreciated, either here in our workshops or after the event.

Peter Shirley
Chair, Urban Wildlife Network, February 2005.

The Network is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. The President is Chris Baines and the members of its Executive are:

Michelle Bennett (Secretary), Coventry City Council
Pat Callaghan, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Newcastle and Potteries UWG
Mathew Frith, Peabody Trust
David Knight, English Nature
David Nicholson-Lord, environmental journalist
Pip Perry, Deeside Urban Wildlife Group
Alan Scott, London Wildlife Trust
Richard Scott (Treasurer), the National Wildflower Centre
Peter Shirley (Chair), the West Midlands Wildlife Trusts

Its main aims are to:

- Advance the education and awareness of the public and promote public involvement in all matters concerning wildlife and nature conservation in urban areas.
- Promote and increase understanding of the importance and benefits of nature, and natural systems and functions, in towns and cities.
- Encourage, advise and support members of the community, voluntary, private and public sectors involved in conserving, restoring and creating natural and semi-natural habitats in towns and cities, and to otherwise provide biodiversity in urban areas.
- Promote a strategic vision of urban living built on sustainable natural systems and enhanced connections between people and nature.

In his 'Manifesto for Green Cities' David Nicholson-Lord calls for, amongst other things:

- Scrapping the indicator that measures sustainability by the proportion of brown field sites redeveloped.
- Scrapping the target that 60% of new houses should be built on brown field sites.
- Having a new sustainability indicator measuring people's satisfaction with the urban environment.
- Having a target for the proportion of managed urban land in designated greenway strategies.
- Mandatory standards for the quantity and accessibility of urban open spaces.
- More imaginative green space design.
- Greener housing design.
- Habitat creation.
- River and wetland restoration and sustainable drainage.
- Legislative and institutional changes to facilitate this manifesto.

If you want to comment on our ideas, or receive further information please contact either:

<p>Peter Shirley 72 Dagger Lane West Bromwich West Midlands B71 4BS</p> <p>0121 532 9265</p> <p>petershirley@blueyonder.co.uk</p>	<p>Michelle Bennett Culture and leisure 2nd Floor West Orchard House 28-34 Corporation Street Coventry CV1 1GF</p> <p>024 7683 2720</p> <p>michelle.Bennett@coventry.gov.uk</p>
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Conference Programme

The Chair was Professor Chris Baines

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| 10.30 | Welcome and introductions |
| 10.40 | Presentations |
| | 1. David Nicholson-Lord, environmental journalist, Urban Wildlife Network |
| | 2. Nigel Doar, Director, Sheffield Wildlife Trust |
| | 3. Malcolm Barton, Groundwork Regional Director, Yorkshire and Humber |
| | 4. Deborah Fox, Head of Standards and Best Practice, CABI Space |
| 12.20 | Questions to speakers |
| 12.30 | Lunch |
| 1.30 | First workshops |
| 2.25 | Second workshops |
| 3.10 | Key points feedback |
| 3.25 | Summary and close |
| 3.45 | Conference ends |

Speakers

Chris Baines grew up in Sheffield. He worked in the local parks department when he left school, and then studied horticulture and landscape architecture at university. An early career in landscape contracting, included several years of greening the deserts of the Middle East and creating community landscapes in some of the UK's inner-city housing estates. Chris taught landscape architecture at post-graduate level until 1986 when he was awarded an honorary personal professorship at the University of Central England, in Birmingham.

Chris now works as a self-employed freelance, and advises government ministers, local councils and water, construction and housing companies, on environmental practice. He is a member of the expert panel of the Heritage Lottery Fund, the steering panel of the BBC's Breathing Places campaign and the steering committee of CABI Space. In 2004 he was awarded the RSPB annual medal for his contribution to conservation. He is committed to urban wildlife and wildlife gardening. He works from home in Wolverhampton, is president of the Urban Wildlife Network and vice-president of The Wildlife Trusts.

David Nicholson-Lord is an environmental writer, formerly with The Times, The Independent and The Independent on Sunday. He wrote *The Greening of the Cities* (Routledge, 1987) and *Green Cities - And Why We Need Them* (New Economics Foundation, 2003). Amongst other things he is on the Executive of Urban Wildlife Network, and vice-chair of the New Economics Foundation.

Nigel Doar is Director of Sheffield Wildlife Trust - the largest voluntary sector nature conservation and environmental regeneration organisation in South Yorkshire. As an ecologist and natural resource manager he has worked for the Scottish Wildlife and Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trusts, the University of Stirling and the Nature Conservancy Council. He has written and co-written several environmental papers, articles and reports, including *The State of Scottish Green space for Scottish Natural Heritage* in 1997.

Malcolm Barton currently works for the environmental charity Groundwork as the Regional Director for Yorkshire and the Humber. Before taking up the post in January 2005, he worked as a consultant advising on a wide range of matters relating to the natural and built environments but with a particular emphasis on the project management and delivery of brown field reclamation. From 1996 to 2001 he was involved in the delivery of Groundwork's £58 million 'Changing Places' programme. Leading on this large national programme of derelict land reclamation was his first taste of the 'not for profit' sector having previously pursued a career spanning over thirty years in construction management.

His early work was as an engineer and then projects manager on a wide array of construction projects including several years spent in the tunnelling industry. From 1975 – 1996, he was Managing Director and then Chief Executive of opencast coal mining and construction companies operating within the UK, Europe and the United States. Work during this period also included large-scale derelict land reclamation projects, housing development and specialist demolition.

Deborah Fox is part of CABI Space, the national champion for England's parks and green spaces. Previously a director of ENCAMS, she also worked for over a decade in the North East and Yorkshire, in conservation work and environmental education. Thriving on the enthusiasm of young people in Middlesbrough in the nineties, her recent work has reinforced her belief in the importance of involving young people in designing and caring for their local places and spaces.

Participating Organisations

The Urban Wildlife Network is the successor to the Urban Wildlife Partnership. Since 1993 the Partnership has supported nature conservation activities in towns and cities throughout the UK. The Network will build on this to promote a strategic new vision of urban living, built on sustainable natural systems and enhanced connections between people and nature.

The Wildlife Trusts are a unique partnership of 47 local Wildlife Trusts covering the whole of the UK and the Isle of Man and Alderney. The partnership campaigns for the protection of wildlife and invests in the future by helping people of all ages to gain a greater appreciation and understanding of nature. Collectively The Wildlife Trusts have approximately 530,000 members and manage almost 2,500 nature reserves, covering more than 80,000 hectares of land. These include some of the UK's finest wildlife sites in both inner city locations and rural areas.

CABE Space is part of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment and was set up in May 2003. It champions excellence in the design and management of parks, streets and squares in our towns and cities. CABE Space receives funding from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and support from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

Groundwork is a federation of Trusts in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, each working with their partners to improve the quality of the local environment, the lives of local people and the success of local businesses in areas in need of investment and support. Groundwork's vision is of a society made up of sustainable communities, which are vibrant, healthy and safe, which respect the local and global environment and where individuals and enterprise prosper.

English Nature is the statutory body that champions the conservation and enhancement of the wildlife and geological features of England, both in towns and cities and in the wider countryside. This includes work on brown fields, access to green spaces and urban design, as well as grants for local green spaces, sponsorship of the Green Flag Awards and advice on Community Strategies.

Delegates Registered for the Conference

Name	Position	Organisation
Alex Shaw	Group Leader	Urban Vision Salford
Allison Graham	Community Leisure Officer	City of York Council
Ally Mackenroe	Community Development Worker	Lanacashire Global Education Project
Andy Millard	Senior Lecturer in Ecology	Leeds Metropolitan University
Anna Collins	Assistant Conservation Officer	English Nature Wigan
Anna Forster	External Funding and Projects Officer	Bury MBC
Anne Selby	Chief Executive	WT for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside
Annie Merry	Project Coordinator	Operation Eden
Barbara Collier	Reserves Officer	Taunton Deane Borough Council
Bob Bevan	Broadfield Park Lottery Warden	Rochdale MBC
Cameron Baines	Queen's Park Warden	Rochdale MBC
Chris Baines	President	Urban Wildlife Network
Chris Calvert	Greenspace Regeneration Project Manager	WT for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside
Chris Childe	Education Coordinator	Groundwork Wirral
Claire Cunniffe	Community Development Officer	Warwickshire WT
Clive Briffett	Director	Trust of the Environment in Oxfordshire
Colin Barry	Projects Manager	Rice Lane City Farm Liverpool
Colin Evans	Park Warden	Manchester City Council
Dan Ellis	Senior Projects Officer	Groundwork Wirral
David Campbell	Project Coordinator	Groundwork Leeds
David Flavelle	Area Parks Manager	Leicester City Council
David Knight	Urban Policy Officer	English Nature
David Nicholson-Lord	Environmental Writer	Urban Wildlife Network
Dawn Holmes	Team Leader - Healthy Environments	Groundwork Rossendale
Debbie Samuel	Research Assistant	Leeds Metropolitan University
Deborah Beeson	Biodiversity Project Officer	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Deborah Fox	Head of Standards and Best Practice	CABE Space
Eddie Curry	Head of Parks and Open Spaces	Preston CC
Elaine Weller	Nature Conservation Officer	Vale Royal BC
Elizabeth Auty	Biodiversity Officer	Tees Valley WT
Fiona Allison	Chair	Castle Residents' Association Ashington

Gavin Forster	Projects Coordinator	Groundwork Leeds
Geoff Lake	Area Parks Manager	Leicester City Council
Geoff Mason	Parks Officer	Leicester City Council
Graham Peake	Community and Education Manager	Staffordshire WT
Graham Schoon	Countryside Officer	Bury MBC
Helen Bush	Executive Director Operations	Groundwork St Helens
Helen Charlesworth	Design and Regeneration Officer	Tameside MBC
Iain Webb	Project Officer	Cambridge City Greenways Project
Ian Bolland	Senior Parks Manager	Leicester City Council
Ian Coburn	Parks Development Manager	Sunderland City Council
Ian Graham	Countryside Ranger Team Leader	Sunderland City Council
Ian Walmsley	Assistant Area Manager	Stockport MBC
Imogen Fuller	Regeneration Officer	Oldham MBC
Janine Wigmore	Policy Coordinator Places	Groundwork Foundation
Jason Gaskell	People and Wildlife Manager	Northumberland WT
Jeff Clarke	Wildspace Officer	Halton Borough Council
Jenny Scholefield	Conservation Manager	London WT
Joanne Jones	Landscape Designer	St Helens Council
Joanne Ramdewor	Productive Landscapes Officer	WT for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside
John Adamus	Park Ranger	Preston CC
John Bentley	Grounds Services Officer	North Yorks CC
John McIvor	Landscape Architect	Rochdale MBC
John Price	Team Leader - Parks	Milton Keynes Council
John Robinson	Park Ranger	Preston CC
John Steedman	Assistant Manager Parks - South	Manchester City Council
Jon Fisher	Community Projects Officer	Groundwork Wirral
Jonathan Pounder	Tees Corridor Officer	Tees Valley WT
Julie Lawrence	Head of Community Education	BBOWT
Kate Dewey	Conservation Officer	Staffordshire WT
Kath Brogan	Chief Landscape Architect	Preston City Council
Kelly Flynn	Senior Media Officer	Greater London Authority
Kerry O'Flinn	Community Wildlife Manager	BBOWT
Kevin Curran	Nature Conservation Officer	Liverpool City Council
Kevin Hand	Director (Campaigns)	Tree Council Cambridge

Kieran Cummings	Regeneration Officer	Oldham Borough Council
Kim Paterson	Community Projects Coordinator	WT for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside
Kuniginda Gough	Regional Landscape Architect	English Heritage Birmingham
Laura Dewey	Planning Officer	Southend-on-Sea BC
Liz Hoehnke	Programme Officer in Standards and Best Practice	CABE Space
Louisa Maunder	Community Wildlife Officer	Essex WT
Malcolm Barton	Regional Director Yorks & Humberside	Groundwork
Mandy North	Conservation Officer	English Nature Wigan
Mark Bolton	Community Project Officer	Groundwork Rossendale
Mark Boothroyd	Principal Landscape Architect	Groundwork Wirral
Mark Jacobs	Producer	BBC Natural History Unit
Marney Harris	Doorstep Greens Assistant Adviser	Countryside Agency North East
Martin Hathaway	HLF and HMR Manager	Rochdale MBC
Mary Lee	Coordinator	Action Etherow and Goyt Stockport
Melanie Johnston	Landscape Architect	Community Technical Aid Centre
Michelle Bennett	Senior Urban Ranger	Coventry City Council
Mike Bent	Parks and Open Spaces Officer	Bury MBC
Mike Fitt	Director of Parks and Deputy Chief Exec	The Royal Parks
Mike Molyneux	Executive Director Operations	Groundwork St Helens, Knowsley, Sefton & Liverpool
Morgan Bradshaw	Trust Member	Mersyside Environmental Trust
Najmussaib Sheikh	Parkland Strategy Manager	Blackburn with Darwen BC
Naomi Brookes	Project Manager	Cambridge Green Belt Project
Neil Oxley	Countryside Services Manager	Blackburn with Darwen MBC
Nick George	LLPG Custodian	Tameside MBC
Nigel Doar	Director	Sheffield WT
Nigel Mathews	Head of Wildlife Awareness and Education	Kent WT
Paul Corner	Project Coordinator	Action Wirral Rivers
Paul Lampkin	Park Ranger	Preston CC
Paul McKenna	Ranger	St Helens Council
Paul Scragg	Parks and Environment Manager	Liverpool City Council
Paul Wilkinson	Head Regional Conservation Policy	WT Cambridgeshire and Northants
Pete Appleton	Environment Officer	Sefton CVS
Peter Morgan	Policy Manager (Places)	Groundwork Foundation
Peter Shirley	Conference Organiser	Urban Wildlife Network

Pip Perry	Chair	Deeside Urban Wildlife Group
Rachel Sharp	Head of Biodiversity	Avon WT
Richard Knightley	LNR Officer	WT for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside
Richard Scott	Landscape Architect	Landlife
Sal Bullimore	Environmental Programme Manager	Royds Community Association Bradford
Sally Rogers	Doorstep Greens Adviser	Countryside Agency North East
Saul Mearns	Park Warden	Manchester Leisure
Sheila Guha	Senior Landscape Architect	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Stefan Cabaniuk	Park Officer	Leicester City Council
Stephen Whittaker	Local Nature Reserves Officer	City of York Council
Steve Prewer	Manager of Countryside Services	Basildon DC
Sue Young	Conservation Officer	Kent WT
Susan Antrobus	Wildspace Officer	Middlesbrough Council
Suzanne Carr	Programme Manager	Groundwork Wirral
Suzie McPherson	Urban Greenspaces Project Officer	WT for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside
Tim Brooks	Community Wildspace Officer	Groundwork Erewash Valley
Tom Veitch	Projects Officer	Operation Eden Liverpool
Tony Hothersall	Forest Director	Red Rose Forest
Trudie Mills	Wildspace Grants Officer	English Nature Peterborough
Vernon Rhodes	Senior Landscape Architect	Rochdale MBC
Wendy Burnett	Conference Administrator	WT for B'ham and the Black Country