

**Minutes of OHF Committee Meeting held on 16 September 2009**  
**At the Institute of Materials, Minerals & Mining, 1 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5DB**

**Present**

William Bird (Natural England) – Chair, Rory Arnell (Blue Gym), Jill Attenborough (The Woodland Trust), Sheila Beck (dial in from NHS Health Scotland), Karen Bollan (The Royal Society for Public Health), Katherine Bolt (RSPB), Jo Burgen (National Trust), Ben Cottam (Royal College of Physicians), Andrew Church (University of Brighton), William Crookshank (Environment Agency), Tony Crosby (Heritage Lottery Fund), Sarah Dandy (The Campaign for Greener Healthcare), Kevin East (British Canoe Union), Stella Goddard (Natural England), Martin Gorringer (DEFRA), George Gray (The Prince's Foundation for Integrated Health), Paul Hamblin (English National Park Authorities Association), Chris Hines (Blue Gym), Yvonne Hunt (BTCV), Veronica Reynolds (Walk England), Richard Rutter (British Waterways), Martin Seymour (IDeA), Ged Sola (Big Lottery Fund), Dave Stone (Natural England), Sue Sutton (ISPAL), Kay Thomson (Department of Health); Mark Weston (British Horse Society)

**Apologies**

Bridget Finton (Scottish Natural Heritage), George Morris (NHS Health Scotland), Roger Geffen (CTC), Mike Taylor (National Association for AONBs), Bertie Williams, Andrew Hudson (CCPR), Huw Rees (Wales Audit Office), Lindsay Sutherland, Tamsin Phipps (British Canoe Union)

**Secretariat**

Linda Leung, Foundation for Integrated Health

*The meeting was called to order at 14.00 by William Bird.*

**1 Introductions**

- 1.1 William Bird (WB) welcomed all to the meeting. WB invited all around the table to give a brief self-introduction.
- 1.2 WB introduced Linda Leung, seconded from the Prince's Foundation for Integrated Health for 1.5 days a week, to provide Secretariat service to the Outdoor Health Forum. WB thanked the Foundation for the secondment; and Natural England for funding the post.

**2 Apologies (see above)**

**3 Minutes of last meeting**

- 3.1 WB noted that the last Committee meeting was in December 2008 and most of the actions had already been dealt with.
- 3.2 The minutes were approved as correct.

**4 Short Updates**

- 4.1 WB invited brief updates from the following projects:
  - 4.1.1 Blue Gym (Chris Hines)
    - Blue Gym (<http://www.bluegym.org.uk/>) was launched in August 2009.
    - PCTs in the SW will soon refer patients to the Blue Gym website to find out information on outdoor activities. CH noted that establishing credibility based on scientific, evidenced based research would be crucial for the project to be recognised as a valid prescription by doctors.
    - Forum members interested in further discussing Blue Gym to contact Chris Hines ([chris@hines62.wanadoo.co.uk](mailto:chris@hines62.wanadoo.co.uk)).

#### 4.1.2 Green Gym (Yvonne Hunt)

- Green Gym ([www2.btcv.org.uk/display/greengym](http://www2.btcv.org.uk/display/greengym)) was set up 10 years ago by BTCV and William Bird, with the objective of improving health and well-being through natural conservation and activities.
- Today BTCV and their partners had established 100 GG groups, 40 of which were in England. They also have links with 6 projects in Australia.
- In Lincolnshire, the Green Gym was linked with GP practices – e.g. creating a community garden adjacent to a health centre and signposting patients into activities held there.
- In taking the scheme to its next stage, BTCV is looking to greatly expand number of GG by providing more effective support to enable those who wanted to set up GG.
- The Green Gym operating model might be broadened.
- YH invited OHF members to get in touch if they were interested in working with BTCV to apply the Green Gym brand to their environmental activities ([y.hunt@btcv.org.uk](mailto:y.hunt@btcv.org.uk)).

#### 4.1.3 Walking for Health (Stella Goddard)

- WfH ([www.whi.org.uk](http://www.whi.org.uk)) was set up 10 years ago by Natural England, aimed at encouraging people, particularly those who did little exercise, to do regular walks in their communities.
- In 2009, in line with the Department of Health's agenda, fresh efforts were being put in to build the project to make 200,000 people more active by 2012.
- Natural England provided training, networking and support for volunteers involved.
- A new evaluation methodology (Outdoor Health Questionnaire) had been developed to collect robust data systematically to demonstrate the link and progress of physical activities towards health.  
[\[www.whi.org.uk/results.asp?key=2537|0|3CB9715613341|p|971|0\]](http://www.whi.org.uk/results.asp?key=2537|0|3CB9715613341|p|971|0)
- Tony Crosby drew attention to the Heritage Lottery Fund leaflet which highlighted the HLF's support for Health Walks in public parks.

#### 4.1.4 NHS Forest (Sarah Dandy)

- Part of the Campaign for Greener Healthcare.
- Currently in its pilot phase, the project was aimed at increasing access to new and existing green spaces on NHS estates and in the local surrounding area ([www.greenerhealthcare.org/nhs-forest](http://www.greenerhealthcare.org/nhs-forest)) for NHS staff and patients alike.
- With the objective of one tree per NHS employee, it was hoped that 1.3 million trees would be planted. In the long term, the forest would play a significant part in reducing carbon footprint of the health service.
- Key partners were the Forestry Commission, the Woodland Trust, NHS Trusts, Natural England, and the Sustainable Development Unit.
- National launch scheduled for 6 October 2009.
- Members interested in the project, contact Sarah Dandy ([sarah.dandy@kintoa.org](mailto:sarah.dandy@kintoa.org)).

#### 4.1.5 Physical Activity Alliance (William Bird)

- The Department of Health's Physical Activity Strategy 'Be Active, Be Healthy' underpinned the Department's support for the Alliance ([www.activityalliance.org](http://www.activityalliance.org)).
- Findings of a national consultation regarding the role, remit and structure of the Alliance was published on 15 September 2009.
- A stakeholder event for those who took part in the consultation process would be held on 22 September 2009 during the Leisure Industry Week ([www.liw.co.uk](http://www.liw.co.uk)). The event would outline stakeholders' views on the role and structure of the Alliance and provide the opportunity for open discussion that would directly affect the final report.
- The Alliance looked to be launched in late October/early November 2009.

#### 4.2 Other updates and contributions

##### 4.2.1 Kay Thomson (Department of Health) was encouraged that the OHF was active again.

- KT drew attention to the Secretary of State's vision for a fitter England.
- Suggested other collaborator in this agenda: the Department of Communities and Local Government ([www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)).
- KT drew attention to the 'Let's Get Moving' Physical Activity Care Pathway (PACP). A commissioning toolkit was due to be launched in the next 10 days.
- KT invited those interested to get in touch: [Kay.thomson@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Kay.thomson@dh.gsi.gov.uk)

##### 4.2.2 Veronica Reynolds (Walk England) drew attention to the Active Challenge Routes project.

- The project was aimed at creating 2012 one-mile walking routes across the country by 2012 funded by Department of Health.
- Launch was scheduled for early spring 2010.
- All comments and inputs welcome; [veronica.reynolds@walkengland.org.uk](mailto:veronica.reynolds@walkengland.org.uk)

## 5 MRC/ESRC Outdoor and Health Network (research)

- 5.1 Andrew Church gave an overview of the Outdoor and Health Network and the research project (<http://www.outdoorshealthnetwork.co.uk>).
- 5.2 The Network comprised a group of researchers and public sector/policy representatives looking to examine the relationship between health and well-being and use of the outdoors.
- 5.3 The project was co-funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Medical Research Council (MRC).
- 5.4 The project would be funded until April 2010.
- 5.5 AC offered to return to share findings.

## 6 Discussion of document “The Outdoor Health Forum 2009-2012: A Proposal”

- 6.1 WB invited all to discuss the Proposal circulated. Attached as appendix I was a written submission from SNH as its representative could not attend the meeting in person.
- 6.2 Those present evaluation options presented in the proposal and agreed on the following:
  - 6.2.1 OHF should continue its development towards becoming a major influence on the environment and human health, in all four countries of the UK.
  - 6.2.2 Communications was a vital; and should be a standing item in all meetings.
  - 6.2.3 Delivery
    - OHF would remain a network, sharing good practice.
    - OHF would take on a more active role towards shaping health agenda and policies.
    - OHF would look to identify gaps in the current delivery schemes.
    - OHF to position itself as a conduit towards assisting the Department of Health and NHS in achieving its agenda.
  - 6.2.4 Research
    - Recognising the importance of research in underpinning the Forum’s initiatives, OHF should seek to scope out how scientific evidence base research could support and benefit OHF’s projects.
    - The Outdoor and Health Network and the research project would be a useful reference point.
  - 6.2.5 Policy
    - OHF should be involved in pre-policy agenda shaping.
- 6.3 Next steps were agreed as follows:
  - 6.3.1 OHF Executive Committee conference call to be arranged. Committee would draw up proposals on the points agreed above.  
**Action: Linda Leung to arrange**
  - 6.3.2 Proposals to be presented to next OHF meeting, tentatively December 2009.  
**Action: Linda Leung to coordinate preparation of proposals**

## 7 Website

- 7.1 LL gave an overview of the current OHF website ([www.outdoorhealthforum.com](http://www.outdoorhealthforum.com)).
- 7.2 It was agreed that website would retain its current format with content updated.  
**Action: Linda Leung to update OHF website.**
- 7.3 At a later stage, and when funding streams were clearer, OHF could look to re-design and re-launch the website.  
**Action: Linda Leung to invite quotes and commission re-development as required.**

The meeting concluded at 16.30.  
Minutes submitted by Linda Leung, OHF Secretariat

## Appendix I

### SNH's views on proposal papers – September 2009

The paper begins by citing a number of national / UK-wide initiatives which link public health and the natural environment. This, I believe, highlights the key benefit to be offered by the continuation of the Outdoor Health Forum – ie information-sharing, which in itself provides the opportunity to instigate appropriate co-ordination / collaboration.

In suggesting that the Outdoor Health Forum has 2 options for the future, we agree that it is preferable that the forum continues to function – the crucial decisions lie around the future Terms of Reference for the forum.

The paper proposes that the Outdoor Health Forum would “set the agenda, support and co-ordinate work on environment and health within the UK”. On first reading, this ‘aim’ goes much further than the previous role of the Outdoor Health Forum and requires serious consideration as to the need for this expanded aim, and its feasibility.

From SNH's point of view, we feel that it may be difficult (and costly) for the Outdoor Health Forum to establish means and mechanisms to achieve the more ambitious Options as outlined in the paper with regard to Delivery, Research and Policy. For a range of reasons, including differences across the UK re: policy priorities and targets, funding mechanisms, established systems and structures etc, we would not recommend the Outdoor Health Forum making a commitment to undertake:

- A more active role in the **Delivery** of UK schemes
- The development of a 3 year **Research** strategy for the UK
- The development of a UK **Policy** on health and the environment.
  - see below for an outline of relevant structures in place in Scotland

SNH sees the primary benefit from the continued operation of the Outdoor Health Forum as - the sharing of information between the devolved Governments, and appropriate environment, health and outdoor recreation organisations across the UK. The Outdoor Health Forum could also provide a unified ‘presence’ and communicate ‘key messages’ for the collection of environment, health and outdoor recreation organisations at key events including conferences, seminars, trade shows etc.

Information-sharing, and where appropriate, collaboration, would fall into the following areas:

- research
- specific policy programmes / initiatives
- promotional campaigns
- monitoring & evaluation

Our suggestion for the Outdoor Health Forum over the next period would be to build links with the health sector, and to expand the Forum's membership to include key bodies from around the UK. The purpose of this would be to increase understanding between the environment and health sectors, and encourage joint working.

In Scotland we have a range of networks / working groups:

- Green Exercise Partnership – SNH, Forestry Commission, NHS Health Scotland
- Scottish Physical Activity Alliance – c/o NHS Health Scotland
- Health & Environment Network
- Scottish Physical Activity Research Collaboration
- National Physical Activity Research & Evaluation
- National Physical Activity Advocacy Group for Scotland (not formally established yet)