

BEDDINGTON CONSERVATION SCIENCE GROUP
Minutes of Meeting

Date : **Wednesday 12th September 2018; 10:00-13:40**

Place : Viridor Offices, Beddington Farmlands

Present:

David Warburton [DW]	London Borough of Sutton (Chair)
Peter Walker [PW]	Viridor Waste Management
Marcus Kohler [MK]	MKA Ecology
Martin Boyle [MB]	Mitcham Common Conservators
Roy Dennis [RD]	Beddington Farmland Bird Group
Sulam Deaville	London Borough of Sutton (Biodiversity Assistant)
Fiona Lander [FL]	London Borough of Sutton (Planning Enforcement)

The Chair welcomed Roy Dennis as the new BFBG member of the CSG.

1. Apologies

- Apologies: Andy Webber (LBS PLanning), Derek Coleman (Sutton group of London Wildlife Trust).

2. Minutes of Last Meeting to be agreed and actions undertaken

The Minutes were agreed, with all actions to be taken forwards being covered under the agenda, except Item 4a on bird scarers. PW informed the group that 6 had been purchased and installed c. w/c 15 June 2018. The group discussed the habituation of birds, particularly gulls and corvids, to the scarers and various items were suggested. As a way forwards, a combination of tactics are likely to be required and modified at regular intervals by staff on the ground.

[Chair's Note: The minutes from each previous meeting are circulated before the next meeting, as a Google Doc. All CSG members need to add changes / comments to the Google Doc, as it is designed to be accessible to almost all

members (it appears the IT system for MB prohibits this, hence a Word Doc will be sent if requested, where tracked changes needs to be switched on and the Doc sent back).

Action → All CSG members to read and comment on the minutes supplied, prior to the meeting, if any changes are required.]

3. CAMC update

DW & FL provided an update on the current status of the CAMC. Three Councillors have been elected to be Council representatives and the CAMC met informally on the 20th August to discuss the election of the Chair and other governance issues. MK outlined some of the issues currently faced by the CAMC, including lack of senior officer support from LBS, lack of adequate secretariat support and lack of funding. MB questioned the ability of the CAMC to deliver effectively, in line with the issues MK raised.

DW and FL responded that these were noted by the Council and although the CAMC was an external body, DW and Andy Webber had met with their Strategic Director to flag up these issues and seek ways forwards, which may require modifications to the Constitution of the CAMC, going forwards.

4. Site Restoration

- A. Sacrificial Crops - PW reported that sowing the northern of the 2 plots by the northern lake was sown at the same time as the smaller new plots but didn't see any germination and growth. The discussion was around an assessment of whether it was available nutrients in the area previously used for cropping or gull excrement on the plot that impacted this. The other plots, identified at the March CSG, were undertaken but had patchy results due to the very dry weather.
- ACTION** → DW, MK & PW to assess on 20/09/18 and recommend any necessary remediation works, which may include recultivation and seeding.

DW mentioned the possible lack of sufficient winter food sources, due to the poor results of the spring crops. MK and PW responded that this had been considered and PW had received quotes for additional feeder stations, if these were required to provide additional food sources.

MK reported that some species, such as linnet, would not go to feeders and may require seed on an cable roll. This may require netting to restrict pigeon and vermin take but may also restrict linnets. No real resolution to this issue was resolved. It may be that linnet numbers take a hit this winter.

ACTION → PW to purchase 3 additional feeder stations

ACTION → MK & BFBG to discuss best locales for these stations, once purchased

PW mentioned that he was considering fencing in (split rail fencing) the permanent (RMP designated) plots, which may assist with reducing seed predation and grazing from geese.

PW asked whether sacrificial crop on the slope to the east of the northern lake was required, as this was designated on the RMP but had suffered small soil slippages, which, combined with the slope, makes cultivation difficult. MK and RD both stated that that area had developed into quite a useful area for species such as sedge warbler, in part due to the coverage of ribbed melilot and the mosaic of grassland and scrub. The CSG determined that this should be assessed on the separate site visit but if it was functioning well, it may be best to leave this and concentrate sacrificial crops elsewhere. MK stated that parts of this are needed spot treatment. DW mentioned that, if the ruderal area of the meadowlands was unlikely to be turned into species rich grassland, this could provide an area for sacrificial crops. MK responded that this area had some use in its own right, with a passage grasshopper warbler noted there.

The CSG determined that it may be better to leave this area, if the chances of successful habitat creation were slim but that it required further assessment.

- B. Acid Grassland - PW had forwarded on the brief put forwards by their contractor for discussion but had not been able to align times to hold a tele-conference, due to various parties taking annual leave over the summer months. PW also mentioned that a colleague had provided a possible alternative, should the CSG not feel confident with the proposed trial methodology.

ACTION → PW to arrange a teleconference with the contractor and DW & MK during w/c 17 September.

- C. Wet Grassland - PW reported that he was sorry there had been delays in sending the updated material from WWT to DW for comment and dissemination to the CSG and was also sorry there had been delays in him chasing WWT over the comments made by DW on the new final design details. Again, most of this was due to various parties annual leave. PW reported that AN had been pursuing various quotes from the Framework contractors to deliver the final grading and microtopography.

MB asked about the timescales for delivery.

MK was particularly concerned that if the wet grassland was not correctly contoured by spring 2019, the state of the displacement habitats may impact on lapwing numbers and that a mitigation strategy needed to be considered now. After some discussion about the necessity for a variation to planning, it was determined that the revised Phase 1 grassland was more in line with the approved drawings and therefore, that a variation was not required. This being so, DW stated that the bulk dig for the works should be undertaken ASAP, with the final grading details to be delivered ASAP after the bulk dig and after agreement on the design from WWT.

ACTION → PW / Alan Norman to start bulk dig works immediately.
ACTION → PW / Alan Norman to get final responses from WWT to DW ASAP, who will then inform the CAMC
ACTION → MK to draw up a plan of key beds in 100 Acre that require management for breeding lapwings in 2019, as a mitigation measure and to promote lapwing nesting attempts across the site
ACTION → PW to explore options for creating new wet grassland in the 'additional nature conservation land' area

DW asked about the anti-predation fencing around the wet grassland. PW responded that this would, as discussed, take the form of 2m high weldmesh / chainlink fencing, dug in to at least 150mm, which would sit inside the perimeter fencing. It needs careful judging around the scrub edges, so it doesn't interfere with scrub, not cause any possible additional predator perches.

PW confirmed to DW's question that WWT to act as ECoW for the final contouring had been included within the quotes undertaken.

D. Reedbeds - The CSG discussed the need to add more reed to the southern reedbed and where this could come from. The practicalities of moving large amounts of reed (for instance from the northern wet grassland area) could be undertaken down the permissive path and through the cleared willow area by the SE of the southern lake but water levels still needed to be considered. Ideally, the lake would be drawn down to provide easier working conditions.

DW mentioned the possibility of hand moving rhizomes from established reed area in the southern lake and ensuring these were adequately fenced to prevent grazing by wildfowl.

ACTION → PW, DW & MK to determine where reed will be taken from for winter planting from site meeting 20/09/2018

E. Access

i) Cycleway - PW stated that the route details would be provided to LBS for informal comment, ahead of a planning variation application. The route and concept had been agreed at the last official CAMC.

ii) Fencing - The concept and general arrangement had been agreed at the previous CSG. These will be provided to LBS for informal comment, ahead of a planning variation application. There was a discussion around the addition of standards within hedge lines proposed for the meadowland. Standards should not be planted on the west of the area (to reduce predation perch potential) but could be included within other areas at a low density. Wych elm / resistant elm species should be included as whips and standards to provide greater habitat for white letter hairstreak

ACTION → PW & MK to finalise a species list by 5 October 2018 for PW to

purchase for winter planting.

iii) Bird Hides - The BFBG had provided feedback, which was interpreted as requesting restricted access to any hide / viewing screen on top of the sand martin bank. The following discussion appreciated the value of this vantage point to the BFBG, particularly during passage seasons but it was felt having an area solely for the BFBG was not tenable, once the site was accessible to the public. If this area was to be used as a hide / screen, then the structural stability of the sand martin bank needed assessing. This would be taken forwards at a later date. As such, it was determined that the three hides proposed to be accessible from the permissive footpath would be taken forwards at this time.

ACTION → PW to progress planning addendum for submission to LBS. Still working towards pre-bird breeding season installation

F. Displacement Habitats - DW provided an update that Ian Crump of Thames Water had been in touch to say he couldn't make this meeting but no further information was provided.

The necessity for TW to attend / feedback on their plans for the displacement habitats was elaborated on by DW, who stated that he had met with his Strategic Director and asked for assistance from them to bring TW to the table.

5. Management of Restored Areas

A. Meadowlands - PW reported to DW's question that the area seeded last autumn had not received the necessary management, as they had not been able to procure the correct equipment to do so, although a flail collector is being procured.

ACTION → PW to cut and collect ASAP. MK&DW to assess and determine whether remediation is required after cutting.

ACTION → MG5 areas need topping, tedding and removing ASAP.

UPDATE 20/09/18 → After assessment, lots of the MG5 areas have weedy species. Therefore, cut and clear directly, without haymaking, to reduce weed species. Needs to be assessed next spring

B. Scrub - PW reported that the area south of the southern lake needed partial replanting, after dies off due to the summer drought.

PW stated that there were plans for further scrub planting by the corner of the northern lake and the MEC and that he was planning on undertaking the woodland planting along the southern channel. The existing scrub copse areas were also due to be strimmed and weeded.

The CSG also discussed the previous plans to level off the area in front of the sandmartin bank. The CSG determined that this plan was not in the best interest of the habitats in this area. RD commented that water rail were already noted in

this area.

ACTION → **Scrub around sandmartin bank to be cleared by hand (bramble and willow) before February 2019**

- C. Lakes and islands - RD commented that the islands were heavily vegetated. MK commented that several work days had been undertaken over the last winter to clear the largest island but conceded that there was an ongoing issue with growth.

DW commented that a management brief for this area needs to be created, so that rotational cutting and any necessary larger scale works could be properly planned in. DW also stated that the SNCV volunteers could possibly be utilised to clear some of the islands, if necessary.

ACTION → **Plan to be created by warden / steward when appointed**

6. Site Monitoring

- A. MK reported that the breeding bird data had not been finalised and that NVC surveys had been undertaken but not as yet analysed. DW asked MK whether the Phase 1 survey had been undertaken. This had been and was at an advanced stage of completion but it had been a challenging year. MK also reported that there were two pairs of tree sparrow on site and one pair had had a third brood.

ACTION → **MK to present draft reports at November CSG.**

7. AOB

- A. Possible change to landform - DW and FL reported that they had had discussion with Viridor about whether there was a possibility that the landform to the east of the landfill cell could be restored, as per the RMP, or whether this would not be achieved. The comment from Viridor was that they thought they could source enough material to fulfil the approved contouring.

- B. SDEN - DW provided an update that he had commented on initial restoration plans for the NMA area and asked for more biodiversity improvements. DW asked PW whether he had had any discussions with SDEN / Eneteq about whether he had any preference for tussocky grassland or whether, if Viridor are to manage the area and have the necessary equipment, a more species rich mix can be utilised and treated as hay meadow. PW stated that he had no preference which was to be included.

ACTION → **DW to inform SDEN of his preferred solution once updated plans had been provided and to seek additional wych elm whips / standards.**

- C. Steward / S106 warden - DW has asked the CAMC community stakeholders for comments and hopes to get final approval from HR and advertise the role in the next 6 weeks.

PW reported that he anticipated advertising in the next month or so.

- D. ERF - MK asked whether the various conditions around the ERF, including landscaping etc. would be considered by the CSG. DW & FL updated that they had had several meetings with Viridor and DW had made specific comments about the landscaping at their regular meeting with Viridor in the spring. Given the hiatus with contractors for the ERF, this would be picked up again in meetings starting in late September.

ACTION → DW / FL to feedback at next CSG the results of those discussions and implications for CSG.

- E. Himalayan balsam - MK stated that there had been a large amount of Himalayan balsam pulled along the southern channel in late spring. DW stated that it had appeared in Carew Manor Wetland and appeared to be back on the Wandle, after several clear years through concerted efforts by the Wandle Trust. DW said that the SNCV could, perhaps, undertake some pulling in May 2019.

- F. BFBG - MK asked RD whether it would be possible to meet the BFBG and talk to them, given the various claims and accusations being made over the last few months. RD stated that this would be very welcome. It was not determined at the CSG whether meeting the whole group or just the Exec Committee would be most useful.

ACTION → RD to speak to Exec Committee and invite MK to speak to BFBG (either whole group or just the Exec Committee, whichever the Exec Committee felt would be most beneficial)

- G. Mitigation Scrape - RD commented that the water levels in the mitigation scrape and around 100 Acre were low. MK commented that this was largely due to the summer drought and that it was difficult to get water pumped to the necessary areas.

ACTION → MK to raise again with sludge team to see if there could be any immediate attempts to increase the water levels

- H. Tree sparrows - MK & RD raised the issue that a number of tree sparrow boxes were in poor repair

ACTION → PW & MK to assess and mitigate

8. Date of next meeting: Wednesday 28th November was proposed. The meeting will be at 10.00 am at Viridor Offices, Beddington Farmlands. With no further business, the meeting closed at 13:40

Site visit

Due to the time of the meeting closure, no site visit was undertaken. This will be undertaken by PW, MK and DW on Thursday 20th September at 09:30. Notes from that meeting will be added below.

APPENDIX 1 - Site Meeting Notes 20/09/18

DW, MK, PW, FL & SD

[Site Photos](#)

Sacrificial crop areas:

North-eastern flank of landfill - Discussion around the lack of sacrificial crop take up, with some *Phacelia* evident but no other species readily identifiable. A yellow brassica was present in good numbers. Spring rape and kale are noted within the RMP but it was not clear if the brassica was either of these or a self-seeded wild species.

ACTION → Reset in spring 2019

North western flank of landfill / ruderal mosaic - SDEN works have ceased in this area. An amount of material is stockpiled from the old Cemex area than can go down in this area to rate the ruderal / sacrificial crop mosaic.

ACTION → Create in spring 2019

Western flank of landfill (south) - Evidence of gull roost and Canada geese dunging. Very little vegetation take up.

ACTION → Reset autumn 2018

Western flank of landfill (north) - some *Phacelia* coming into flower. Appears to have only recently germinated.

ACTION → Reset in spring 2019

Meadowlands:

Crest of hill, south of northern lake - dominated by creeping bent *Agrsotis capillaris*, with abundant bristly ox-tongue *Helminthotheca echiodes*. Generally rank grassland.

ACTION → Cut and clear before October. Cultivate ground between scrub stands (1 to 1.5ha) in dry weather ASAP after clearance, following meadowlands management plan.

Main meadowlands area - was a mix of MG5 and other communities. MG5 areas

looking rank, with lots of bristly ox-tongue and patches of creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*. 20% of area to be left uncut, which will be the area to the east of the meadowlands, around the new cycle route.

ACTION → Cut and clear 80% of the area ASAP. Haymaking is not required, as the area is rank. Spring tine harrow cleared areas to break up thatch. Needs re-assessing in spring 2019 for what management will be required in 2019.

Autumn 2017 seeded area - Rank grassland, with some indicator species. Has not had the correct aftercare during 2018.

ACTION → Cut and clear ASAP. Spring tine harrow cleared areas to break up thatch. Needs re-assessing in spring 2019 for what management will be required in 2019, which may require resetting the whole area.

Interesting species noted on site:

Thorn apple *Datura stramonium* - highly toxic member of the nightshade family, often appears during hot summers (photos on shared album)

Blue fleabane *Erigeron acer* - known in Sutton from one small chalk grassland site but, apparently, can also grow in wasteland (photos on shared album)