

BEDDINGTON CONSERVATION SCIENCE GROUP
Minutes of Meeting

Date : **Wednesday 28th November 2018; 10:00-15:00**

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
Derek Coleman [DC]	Sutton Group of London Wildlife Trust
Roy Dennis [RD]	Beddington Farmland Bird Group
Ian Crump [IC]	Thames Water
Fiona Lander [FL]	London Borough of Sutton (Planning Enforcement)

The Chair welcomed Ian Crump, Biodiversity Field Officer for Thames Water, to the CSG.

1. Apologies

- Apologies: Andy Webber (LBS PLanning) and Martin Boyle (Mitcham Common Conservators)

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

Actions of the last meeting were covered under the agenda items, except:

4a(i) - Appendix 1 of the previous meeting outlined the timings for sacrificial crop creation. PW stated that the western flank of the landfill (south) had not been reset and seeded in autumn, as proposed after the site meeting, due to lack of resources,. On further questioning, this transpired that there were no competent staff available to undertake the rotovating and seeding. RD commented that no work has taken place and that this is just accepted by the CSG. DW informed RD that the CSG provides technical advice to Viridor but can't force them to undertake the works. At this point, FL outlined the ability of the Council to enforce planning conditions, which

only occurs in 2023, the due restoration date. However, by recording actions, or not, by Viridor, the Council builds a bank of evidence to be used against Viridor, in the event that a breach of condition is pursued.

DC questioned whether it was realistic to seed all of these areas in spring 2019. MK stated that some of the sacrificial crop came up late, so there was still some autumn provision for over winter but bird scarers need removing from these areas.

Action → PW to remove bird scarers from SC areas ASAP

PW stated that he believed it would be feasible to undertake all necessary seeding in spring or through a staggered approach over 2019, as the sludge operations are almost complete, which frees up 4FTE to deliver on site works.

RD asked whether various seed mixtures had been trialled. DW responded that the seed mixture is set out in the RMP v9.1. MK added that there had been discussion with varying the seed available. DW stated that that may be fine but the efficacy of each would require monitoring and questioned whether capacity was available to determine meaningful results from any trials.

4a(ii) - PW stated that feeder stations had been ordered and hopefully delivered by Christmas 2018. PW and MK have discussed locations. RD noted that feeders had been empty of late. PW asked for it to be reported when feeders were low / empty and they would be filled. PW also considered whether a rota would be useful for ensuring they are all full, particularly in colder weather, when feeding rates increase.

4b - A teleconference between PW, MK & DW occurred, as did a subsequent site meeting with the geotechnical contractor to discuss methodology for determining the best approach to acidifying the area for the acid grassland / heath scrub area. PW reported that he had been in contact but had not received a report as yet.

Action → PW to chase again and get report before Christmas 2018, to start trials early in 2019

4c(i) - PW reported that Alan Norman, responsible for the delivery of the wet grassland engineering, had moved on. No work on the wet grassland had occurred, contrary to the recommendations of the site meeting of the 20th September. PW stated that work would commence from the west of the site, working away from the transverse drainage ditch, in the next week, with an ECoW from WWT on site and a surveyor from SLR, to ensure the microtopography was created correctly.

All scrub at the eastern end of the site is to be removed within the boundary of the wet grassland (this was retained during bird breeding season).

A discussion was held around aftercare, should Phase 1 be completed and seeded by spring 2019. MK stated it was imperative to get the site grazed. A discussion was held around the feasibility of grazing.

Action → DW to forward contact details for the Downlands Partnership (LBS grazing partners) and Richard Bullock (London Wetland Centre) to discuss whether grazing could be delivered next spring, summer and autumn.

Update 24/12/18 → DW sent PW contact details for Downlands Partnership on 30/11/18 and contacted Richard Bullock on the same day but has had no response.

Action → PW to draft grazing plan for Phase 1 wet grassland to be agreed at the February CSG.

4c(ii) - MK provided the plans for necessary mitigation works for 100 Acre and SE Corner, to optimise habitat for breeding lapwing. The sludge team are undertaking this work. MK stated that it was also imperative that this work was undertaken just before the breeding season to ensure the conditions were optimal.

4e(iii) - Viridor have submitted information to LBS for informal officer comment on the necessary planning application to modify the bird hides, cycleway and fencing. Informal officer feedback has been provided.

7d - FL and DW are having ongoing meetings with Viridor around the delivery of conditions on the ERF, with the next meeting scheduled for 6th December.

7e - DW will discuss booking in time for Himalayan balsam pulling in May 2019 with his team.

7f - MK met the BFBG. MK stated that it was very challenging in some respects.

7g - RD commented that works on the mitigation scrape had been undertaken.

7h -MK reported that Tree sparrow boxes had been cleared of old nests, except when winter nests were present, with 70 boxes being viable. DC stated that he wished to discuss locations and numbers with MK for next breeding season.

Action → MK & DC to make a proposal for additional / replacement boxes on TW land and elsewhere. IC to obtain permission for checking for DC.

3. CAMC update

DW commented that the CAMC had 'stalled' and no further action had been taken, as far as he was aware, to address the proposition LBS had put to Viridor in regards financing the secretariat and legal capabilities of the CAMC.

DC and MK both commented that it was important that the CAMC met, even if just informally, sooner rather than later. As one is scheduled for 6th December, it was determined to see if a meeting could be convened for then.

Action → DW to email Cllr. Foster to see if there was appetite for a meeting

Update 29/11/18 → email sent and tentative meeting agreed. Calendar invite sent out.

Update 24/12/18 → informal CAMC meeting held on 6th December. No progression on running the CAMC had come forwards from Viridor. AW took away on action to raise this with the Strategic Director. SD sent a letter to Viridor CEO on 19th December, with a meeting arranged for 8th January 2019 to discuss this and other concerns.

4. Site Restoration update- check against 2018 work plan

DW wanted to try to go through the 2018 work plan to see where works were (completed, in progress, delayed, not started etc.).

No updated work programme was available in time for the meeting

Action → PW to send through 2018 work programme with comments to be disseminated by the end of January 2019, for agreement at the February CSG.

It was noted that the Meadowlands had not been cut and cleared by the time of the site visit on 20th September 2018 and this had not been started until early November. It was, in part, delayed because a Richard's pipit was in the area until the 1st November.

Action → Cut and clear the area ASAP.

Reassess any necessary remediation works in spring 2019.

5. 2019 work plan - draft

PW had prepared a programme of work for delivery prior to the 2019 breeding season and required input as to the necessary works and timings of such.

Lakes and Islands

- Works to the islands in the northern and southern lake were discussed, including removal of willow and strimming and removal of vegetation (purple loosestrife, *Juncus* spp., *Epilobium* spp. etc.) to create better breeding areas for LRP, RP etc. Willows are to be stump treated or eco-plugged. Post-breeding season, works will look at treating the vegetation on the gravel islands with herbicide to restore back to bare ground.
- 1/3rd of the eastern flank of the northern lake should be flail collected / cut and removed to prevent excessive scrub / bramble build up.
- Selective thinning of bramble scrub around the southeastern corner of the northern lake needed to be undertaken
- removal & treatment of willows on the eastern edge of the southern lake (aim for 1/3rd removal)
- removal of marsh grassland on southwestern corner of southern lake
- transplanting reed rhizomes from Phase 1 wet grassland

Neutral grassland

- the enclosures on the western flank of the grassland need removing and the area flail collecting ASAP.
- the southern flank of the northern lake requires flail collecting to reduce bramble dominance in this area.
- eastern flank of southern lake bramble removal
- scrub removal in front of sand martin bank
- bramble thinning near Mile Road gate

Wet grassland (Phase 1)

- contouring to west of drainage channel
- bulk dig and contouring of east of drainage channel
- installation of fencing
- installation of all necessary infrastructure (weirs etc.)
- seeding (April / May)

It is imperative that designs for Phase 2 (north of pylons) & Phase 3 (SE of meadowlands) wet grasslands are progressed and decided during 2019, through iterative design process and meetings between WWT / selected contractor and CSG, to reduce the delays that were apparent with an 'arms length' project management style for Phase 1.

Action → PW to instruct WWT / selected contractor on drafting out designs for Phases 2 and 3 and delivery timet

Acid grassland

As for the wet grassland, it is vital that progress on lab and field trials are made in the first 4-5 months of 2019, ready to inform a larger scale trial or, full remediation, in the autumn of 2019

Action → PW to provide proposed methodology to DW & MK for comment before Christmas 2018

Update 24/12/18 → Initial acid grassland trial methodology sent to DW & MK on 6th December. Comments from DW & MK on 6th & 7th December. In general, seems very comprehensive and should provide all the necessary data required. Requested a 'non-technical summary' to cover the main issues and methods employed, which has not been provided as yet.

General works

- regrading and levelling around SDEN works north of main lake
- subcontracting SDEN woody planting (before end February 2019)
- creation of a 'wharf' near outflow of northern lake to facilitate lake works by boat
- Gate by Mile Road needs rotating to be hung correctly

Action → PW to provide pre-breeding season 2019 work plan to be added to

these minutes.

Action → PW to provide remainder of 2019 work plan by the end of January 2019 for assessment at February CSG

6. Site Monitoring

MK provided the draft 2017/18 Ecology Report

MK reported that there were no significant changes over 2016/17. Territories were up by 3%, with higher numbers of breeding sedge warbler and reed bunting (both up to 4, from 1) but only two occupied tree sparrow boxes.

Mk reported that there were significant changes in the Phase 1 (habitat) mapping in 2018 from 2017, mainly due to the impact of the SDEN pipeline across the site and the settlement lagoons.

Action → CSG comments back to MK before Christmas 2018

7. Thames Water

IC provided a brief bit of background to his recent involvement in Beddington Farmlands. The CSG extended their welcome to IC and emphasised how important TW involvement in the restoration of the wider Beddington Farmlands SMI was, given that TW are a signatory to all s106 planning obligations.

The main area of emphasis for IC was to try to consider future TW involvement in the displacement habitats of 100 Acre and SE Corner / SAM site. A long term understanding of TW's plans for these areas will help define management in the short term but securing these for nature conservation in the long-term is considered absolutely necessary to have a fully functioning site.

DW proposed that IC draft up a proposal for these areas, outlining their importance to the site in the short- and long-term, as well as the significant constraints placed upon them in regards any possible change of usage (i.e. for development) through the adoption of Biodiversity Accounting by LBS.

Action → IC to draft a proposal for the displacement habitats and work with TW and Savill's (TW Planning Agents) to try to determine what TW's long-term commitments to the areas are.

8. AOB

- A. ToR - DW provided the draft Terms of Reference via email on 26/11/18 as a Google Doc and Word document. Either comment, and / or make suggestions on the Google doc or 'Track changes' on the word doc and send back to DW

Action → All to provide comments back on draft ToR by 7th December

2018

Update 24/12/18 → No further comments provided. DW takes these as been accepted and will finalise at the February CSG

- B. SDEN - DW reported that planning permission had been recently given for the restoration. Woody species (whip, standards etc.) are to be in place by the end of February 2019. The hedgerow and meadow grassland mixtures will need to go down in the spring, following the necessary site preparation.
- C. Steward / S106 warden - PW reported that the position of a steward is a balance sheet one, so once landfill operations cease, then he can recruit for aftercare. PW is seeking to change this, to get a steward in earlier.

DW reported that he had asked for and received feedback from the CAMC Councillors on the Warden position. He will now start the LBS recruitment process, aiming for start date of April, which will, hopefully, tie in with 'occupation / commissioning / takeover' by Viridor of the ERF, at which point the money is made available.

Update 24/12/18 → DW has sent JD to Sutton HR for appraisal, before starting the recruitment process.

- D. BLER - DW reported that an application was now in for 'Oak Fields' and as part of No Net Loss and Net Gain, the old 'Pongo Park' was to be used as an offset area. The initial proposal is for c3ha of wetland / swamp, scrub and species rich grassland, based on initial pre-application feedback from DW. DW commented that input from RD, DC and MK would be very useful in his consideration of the planning application, to ensure the BLER delivered not just NNL & NG but also for target species.

Action → DW to forward on relevant plans and documents for consideration and arrange a meeting to discuss w/c 3rd or 10th December.

Update 24/12/18 → DW & MK discussed on 6th December. DW submitted full planning comments on 17/12/18. Main comments were the probable lack of delivering NNL & NG, the general approval for the 'BLER' site but it had excessive scrub and the challenges of delivering a wetland, when no hydrological studies had been undertaken. DC commented on behalf of the London Wildlife Trust, again, generally in favour of the 'BLER' proposals but with significant concerns over delivery.

8. Date of next meeting: Friday 1st March. The meeting will be at 10.00 am at Viridor Offices, Beddington Farmlands.

With no further business, the meeting closed at 13:15

Site visit

A site visit was undertaken to discuss the 2019 pre-breeding season work plan. This is outlined in **5** above.

APPENDIX 1 - 2019 work programme