

BEDDINGTON CONSERVATION SCIENCE GROUP
Minutes of Meeting

Date : **Friday 9th March 2018; 10:00-13:20**

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
Andy Webber	London Borough of Sutton (Head of Planning)
Fiona Lander	London Borough of Sutton (Planning Enforcement)

1. Apologies

- Apologies: Martin Boyle (Mitcham Common Conservators); Peter Alfrey (BFBG).
- Note: Environment Agency no longer attend after introducing an indefinite hiatus to flood monitoring

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

The Minutes were agreed, with all actions being covered under the agenda.

[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

The CAMC was held on the 18th January 2018. All present attended the past CAMC.

Draft dates to align CAMC meetings with CSG meetings have been proposed.

4. Site Restoration

- A. Sacrificial Crops - PW had prepared a rough plan for several areas considered suitable for additional sacrificial crop / ruderal fringes to the south of the MEC overflow, on the newly capped acid grassland area.
- After discussion, it was determined that Area 2 on PW's map would be spring seeded with the same mix as the autumn seeding. MK will digitise the map and propose seed stands, which may include a sole *Chenopodium* crop and possibly, an arable fringe mix to provide high quality nectar and pollen sources during summer
- Action** → PW to email MK the map of proposed areas
- Action** → MK to propose seed stands for agreement at the CAMC on the 15th March

The recent upslope capping was also discussed, with the possibility of putting down a stabilising grass crop. PW had a possible EG6 mix (limestone and chalk) identified, whereas the RMP references an ESG2 (fine grasses mix).

Action → DW to check

Update from DW → The ESG2 mix is substantially cheaper than EG6. There is significant overlap in the species composition of both mixtures, although EG6 has a specialised calcicole in crested hair grass *Koeleria macrantha*, with quaking grass *Briza media* and yellow oat grass being other typical calcicole / neutral hay meadow species. Due to the pH levels, the EG6 mix may be more likely to survive but take us in a direction away from acid grassland (but may indicate feasibility for a high quality calcareous grassland), whereas the ESG2 mix may naturally assist in moving towards an acid grassland at a cheaper cost per hectare, although there is a risk of failure.

It is suggested that spring seeding (April) is undertaken of ESG2, with a condition assessment undertaken in late summer to assess against the seed mix. If there is poor take up, EG6 mix could be used on the next newly capped area in 2019.

- B. Acid Grassland - PW had provided a draft methodology from Southampton University. This took a three year PhD timeframe and sought to assess various techniques in regards establishment potential. DC stated this essentially took us back to square one and delayed establishment. We have a specific question that needs answering, that is: can we create acid grassland without impacting on the River Wandle? PW replied that what had come back was not quite the initial brief but it was understandable that the university would seek to frame the study in this

manner. DW stated that there were likely to be wider benefits from the work but that the timeframe was very concerning. DW proposed that as the PhD would not start until October, could a quick trial be undertaken to understand substrate porosity before then, using a Geotechnical / contaminated land contractor? A lined channel down slope and a receptacle to collect all runoff would be required. Even with the tender process, this could provide 3-4 months worth of summer data, which may determine if a longer term study is necessary, which could, potentially start in the autumn.

Action → PW to draft up a contractor spec to be agreed at CAMC on 15/03/18

C. Wet Grassland -

i) Phase 3 - AW introduced the CSG to a possible change to the contours on the eastern slope of the meadowlands. The amount of inert material to fill this area is highly likely to take 10 years or so to procure. Viridor have proposed a possible change to the agreed RMP, with a steeper eastern slope than is agreed. This would then create a wider flat area up to the boundary with Thames Water. The CSG was invited to provide considerations on what could be done with this to provide an enhancement over the agreed RMP delivery (meadowland). DW had posited the possibility of extending the Phase 3 wet grassland northwards along this area. DC was concerned that the area was still too small for wet grassland and nothing would breed there. Further ideas, such as a large reedbed or lake / reed mosaic were also discussed. The involvement in Thames Water would be absolutely necessary, particularly if the TW lagoons adjacent to the land could be utilised to extend the area, which may then create a much more viable reedbed.

Action → AW & FL to contact TW to start discussions on getting them around the table with Viridor

ii) Phase 1 meeting update: DW updated the group on the meeting held with WWT Consulting on Wednesday, which was not hugely useful, as Dr. Matthew Simpson from WWT had not been fully briefed on MK's feedback from January. An iterative process of discussion needs to occur between CSG and WWT Consulting to get to a point where final details can be agreed and delivered on site. It was proposed that WWT consider the hydrological details more fully and come back with illustrative cross sections and topographical heights (particularly around high water)

Action → DW has forwarded on all his comments, that of MK and Roger Wardle to Dr. Simpson.

It is proposed all details are agreed by June at the latest, to allow works to commence to the west of the current bulk dig area in around mid-July, working east for completion by around mid-August, for seeding in early to mid-September.

iii) Grazing will be dependent on which design is ultimately chosen

PW then provided thoughts on grazing the meadowlands. He explained that each leachate tank (gas well?) would need fencing, creating a kind of 'gulag' visual impression, were the meadowlands to be 'free access'. PW's proposal for discussion was to create a series of, possibly, 3 or more compartments, which would enclose the tanks but allow 20-30m (or wider) strips between the compartments. This would allow better grazing of the area and would provide better outcomes for biodiversity whilst allowing access. DC conceded those points but felt that it would be a PR disaster and another broken promise in regards access.

Action → views of CAMC to be sought on 15/03/18

D. Reedbeds - MK reported back that this had not progressed but there was a high need to deliver quality reedbeds. MK explained that some panicle seed scattering had taken place along several cells to the south of 100 acre and then there were opportunities to move reeds through the Phase 1 wet grassland works.

Action → Reed transplanting is within the 2018 work programme for November and December this year, it is imperative that this is undertaken, or other reed planting is (from purchased plugs etc.) to further the establishment of the southern reedbed, which has stagnated in growth for several years.

E. Access

i) PW outlined the preferred cycleway route around the corner to the north of the southern lake and that gradients were being confirmed, particularly in regards the crossing of the southern ditch, which may require a long switch back

Action → PW to provide more detailed proposal at CAMC 15/03/18

ii) Fencing details were discussed during the discussion on the possible meadowlands fencing; that of stock netting behind a hedgeline, which was then fronted with a simple post and rail.

iii) PW outlined that he would still like to get hides in place from autumn 2018 but needs firmer ideas on possible external cladding and how these might work in practice. DW suggested that some be fully lockable (those for which prolonged bird watching might take place with benches etc.), whereas others could be much more open 'viewing areas' with less to vandalise. It was acknowledged that stakeholder involvement, particularly from the BFBG Exec was required.

Action → CAMC to consider hide locations. These are laid out in the RMP but could, possibly, be changed without a revised planning application.

iv) The southern crossing and remediation works are still planned for autumn 2018 but the final design may necessarily reflect any changes to the landform and Phase 3 wet grassland

- F. Displacement Habitats - FL outlined that the CMS states that management plans are required for 100 acre and the SAM site and that delivery of the CMS is within the S106 both Viridor and Thames Water agreed to, although there is no date for delivery of these management plans. All agreed it was essential to get TW around the table to discuss.

Action → FL to speak to TW and LBS Legal about how to proceed, as these habitats are incredibly important for the species on site and won't be compensated for by on-site (wet grassland) creation, as these two areas cover c.90+ha

5. Management of Restored Areas

A. Meadowlands -

i) Landform remediation is still planned for autumn

ii) discussions were held around a first cut of the meadowlands and autumn seeded areas. PW is seeking a flail collector to undertake the cut and clear work. DW stated that that was fine for the spring works but may not be suitable for the autumn works (haymaking), as this is usually undertaken with a topper (to get long lengths cut), then tedded to dry the hay and then bailed. Although the flail collector may be able to discharge the cut material, it is too small to be tedded (which assists drying) and very difficult to be collected up for baling. Running the flail collector over it again may pick up the arisings but in the experience of DW, leads to compaction of the grass under the tractor wheels and doesn't collect efficiently, having to rely on hand raking with volunteers to remove the arisings.

- B. Scrub - Works to clear willows around the lakes, wetland edge to the east of the southern lake and the islands will be undertaken next week (w/c 12/03/18). Scrub in front of the sandmartin bank will be cleared by reprofiling will wait until the autumn.

6. Site Monitoring

- A. MK provided a copy of the 2016-2017 Annual Ecology Report. MK stated that passerine numbers were low on site and shoveler seemed to be down but these are anecdotal observations. The Annual Ecology Report has had a detailed look at tree sparrows (partly based on works by DW) and revisited the lapwing territory recording methodology, except for 2005 where no data is available, for before MKA took over monitoring.

Action → All to review the AER and revert with questions / queries / concerns back to MK as soon as possible.

7. AOB

- A. ERF Update - DW explained that he was still working on the delivery of Conditions 20 (biodiverse roof) and 21 (lighting) with Viridor. DW has agreed the details for the roof but lighting is still an issue. Discussion in January with Viridor appear to show modelling of light spill from the columns (particularly to the future Phase 2 wet grassland to the immediate west of the ERF) has been improved through the bunds and the use of back baffles but the 'lighthouse effect' from the ERF was of significant concern and details had not been provided about how Viridor would address those issues.
The future of Lagan on site, given the administration of 4 of their contracting aspects was also briefly discussed, with uncertainty around how the ERF and landscaping would be achieved to time
Action → AW to speak to Ian John (Head of Planning at Viridor) and revert at CAMC 15/03/18
- B. SDEN - AW outlined the proposed Non Material Amendment to the line of the SDEN route down the permissive footpath. It is the opinion of LBS officers that this is a better resolution than the approved route. MK was concerned about reptiles and DC about toads. DW responded that he had flagged the reptile issue for addition to the Ecological Report and that the Precautionary Method of Working would address this. The initial clearance would require an Ecological Clerk of Works (EcOW) for the working corridor, which would create an area suitable for reptiles. This work would also take place before the excavations, so there should not be any issues with trapping toads but the excavation works are also to provide escape routes
Action → PW also raised an issue with taking some areas of the site out of access to the BFBG, due to works on the wet grassland and the SDEN pipeline.
Action → PA to provide email addresses of current keyholders to PW
Action → PW to send through a map of temporary excluded areas to BFBG
- C. Steward / S106 warden - PW provided a draft JD for the Aftercare Steward. DW disseminated this before the CSG meeting.
Action → DW will collate comments for discussion at the CAMC on 15/13/18
- D. Surrey Bird Atlas - DC stated that his species account for tree sparrows in the Surrey Bird Atlas had the following sentence inserted '*This is believed to be a result of a failure to implement properly the agreed restoration programme by the waste contractor that is the major industrial user of the site*' with neither his knowledge nor consent. DC stated that this may be factor but was not the sole causality for the decline. DC apologised that this statement had been published. DC had had an email exchange with the editor of the Atlas and had resigned

from the Surrey Bird Club. It was now in print so there was limited redress but would have an article in the next Surrey Bird Club Newsletter. DC also mentioned that he was proposing to write a fuller account of tree sparrows at Beddington for either the London/Surrey Bird Report or a national publication (British Birds or British Wildlife) and wanted some thoughts from Viridor as to whether they would be happy with a national publication.

Action → PW to give comment on national publication but may be best to wait to see written article.

- E. DC raised the issue of high levels of litter to the west of landfill adjacent to the northern lake through the easterly last week. PW stated that a team of 5-6 people were working on the worst areas and would continue until the areas had been thoroughly cleared and that there was a real improvement around the northern lake. DC asked why refuse could not be covered when conditions like this were anticipated. PW responded that James the new landfill manager would learn from this but DC stated that this has been going on for 20 years and should not occur when the consequences are well known. MK also raised the issue of a lot of litter in Oak Fields. Litter in the lake would be dealt with, as far as possible, when undertaking the island works next week.

Action → PW to inform Garry Wolfe of the litter in Oak Fields and have it removed within the next week

- F. MK wanted to discuss the willow removal works around the southern lake with Peter Alfrey. MK suggested $\frac{1}{3}$ removal and the consideration of opening up rides for vehicular movements for transporting reed later this year.

Action → MK to communicate with PA as to any issues with the proposal

- G. DC stated that he attended a Thames Water meeting yesterday and had managed to discuss TW representation on the CSG and CAMC, as well as TW's future plans for Hundred Acre and the SAM site. He had not received a reply on the latter but had submitted a question in advance and has been promised a response. It was of note that TW are now looking as far ahead as 2100AD.

Action → DC to forward on contact details to FL to make contact

Update → DC did this on 09/03/18 and FL has arranged a phone conversation with TW for Tuesday 13/03/18

8. Date of next meeting: Friday 25th May was proposed, as MK is away on the 1st June. The meeting will be at 10.00 am at Viridor Offices, Beddington Farmlands on the consensus date.

Action → All to check availability and DW to revert the new date to CAMC, which have aligned their meetings with the CSG.

With no further business, the meeting closed at 13:20

Site visit

Due to the time of the meeting closure, no site visit was undertaken.