

**Beddington Farmlands Conservation and Access Management Committee meeting minutes  
Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020 14.00**

**Attendees, members of the CAMC:**

Cllr Tim Foster – Chair, London Borough of Sutton  
 Cllr Ben Andrew – Vice-Chair London Borough of Sutton  
 Cllr Jillian Green, London Borough of Sutton  
 Tom Sweeney – Community Representative – Beddington North Neighbourhood Forum  
 Lysanne Horrox – Community Representative – Hackbridge and Beddington Corner NDG  
 Norman Jones Community Representative - Hackbridge and Beddington Corner NDG  
 Derek Coleman – Sutton Branch of the London Wildlife Trust  
 Mathew Frith – London Wildlife Trust – Director of Conservation (*attended from item 3. onwards*)  
 Rosemary Waugh – Thames Water – Corporate Responsibility Manager  
 Dan Cooke – Viridor – Director of Sustainability  
 Adrian Frost – Viridor – Head of Major Projects

**Advisory panel:**

Simon Latham – London Borough of Sutton - Strategic Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration  
 Andy Webber – London Borough of Sutton - Head of Planning  
 David Warburton – London Borough of Sutton - Chair of Conservation Science Group  
 Charlie Owens – London Borough of Sutton – Beddington Farmlands Warden  
 Simon Chalcraft – London Borough of Sutton - Planning Enforcement  
 Andrew Turner - Madano, supporting Viridor

**Guests:**

Verity Thomson – Sutton Cluster Extinction Rebellion – save the lapwing petition co-ordinator  
 Christina Peake – Hackbridge resident and local artist  
 David Mellor – ProLogis – Development Director

Item		Action
1.0	<b>Introductions &amp; Apologies</b>	
1.1	<p>Viridor welcomed members of the Conservation and Access Management Committee (CAMC) to a virtual video call. Cllr Foster welcomed attendees to the call.</p> <p>It was noted that there was an apology shared from Richard Aylard – Thames Water – Sustainability Director.</p>	
1.2	<p>Andrew noted that during the meeting two guests would be welcomed to present at relevant sections Verity Thomson (XR Sutton co-ordinator) to present the ‘save the lapwing’ campaign and Christina Peake (local Hackbridge artist) to present ideas to decorate the bird hides.</p> <p>It was noted that Viridor’s senior management met with London Borough of Sutton senior leadership – Paul Rowland – Simon Latham on 14<sup>th</sup> October to discuss progress on the Farmlands. Cllr Foster confirmed that in future he would prefer matters relating to the Farmlands to be discussed within the CAMC.</p>	
1.3	<p>The CAMC reviewed the actions of the last meeting and agreed that the minutes of the last meeting could be approved following comments shared by David Warburton. It was noted that the CAMC would like to receive the minutes in a timelier fashion – this was agreed.</p>	<b>AT</b>

	<p>Andrew added that Cllr Andrew had kindly shared a series of questions submitted by members of the community ahead of the meeting. It was intended that the agenda for the meeting would aim to cover these points.</p>	
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Introduction to Verity Thomson and presentation of the 'save the lapwing' campaign</b>	
<b>2.1</b>	<p>Verity Thomson of the Sutton XR cluster entered the meeting following nomination to present the key themes of the 'save the lapwing' campaign in a ten-minute presentation slot.</p> <p>Verity noted that there was protest action in Beddington Park over the august bank holiday weekend and there was a c. 2000 signature petition with the core objectives of securing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Habitat management to be conducted on the Hundred Acre and SE Corner historic sludge lagoons.</li> <li>○ The water levels of the lakes are to be managed more carefully to avoid foxes swimming across to the islands.</li> <li>○ Viridor to complete the Restoration Management Plan in accordance with its planning conditions.</li> </ul>	
<b>2.2</b>	<p>Verity shared her experiences of living in Hackbridge and visiting the Farmlands permissive footpath underlining the importance of working together to achieve a successful habitat restoration at the Beddington Farmlands. It was commented that the wider community and international follower of Chang.org were now looking to Viridor to complete the Farmlands restoration and save the lapwing population.</p>	
<b>2.3</b>	<p>Verity sought clarifications around why the COVID-19 lockdown caused an impact to the restoration programme whilst the ERF continued to operate fully. Verity also asked if there were plans to cover over the graffiti in the bird hides and if there had been any consideration into re-establishment programmes to re-introduce target species that had been lost at the Farmlands, including the tree sparrow.</p>	
<b>2.4</b>	<p>Dan Cooke thanked Verity for her presentation and noted that it was very insightful and useful. Dan continued to note that an interim habitat management programme was already in place the historic sludge lagoons to the north and south of the site along with Viridor's commitment to complete the Restoration Management Plan by 2023. It was noted that the restoration roadmap outlined the work completed to date.</p> <p>Dan explained that Viridor continued to be impacted by the availability of contractors being able to travel and work at the Farmlands and noted that this was an ongoing issue for Viridor. There was a discussion around the management of the lake habitats, however it was noted that the foxes were displaying a learned behaviour rather than any failed management practice.</p>	
<b>2.5</b>	<p>Simon Latham added that Verity's presentation was very comprehensive and that it was his understanding that maintaining the water levels in the lakes was key to deterring fox predation. Adrian commented that managing the water levels was part of the wider programme to install weirs into the wet grasslands to manage water flow.</p> <p>Dan confirmed that predator fencing was planned for installation around the wet grassland and lake islands this winter. Andrew noted that Viridor had worked extensively with the RSPB and Beddington Farm Bird Group to establish the London Tree Sparrow Project to monitor the population however their decline was not conclusively proven, the Viridor have and have not done may have caused a local extinction.</p>	

	<p>Cllr Foster and Cllr Andrew also thanked Verity for her time and bringing the ‘save the lapwing campaign’ to the CAMC’s attention.</p> <p>Verity thanked the CAMC for the opportunity and it was agreed that the minutes would be shared with Verity.</p>	<b>AT</b>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Viridor response to sludge habitat management and lapwing population</b>	
<b>3.1</b>	<p>Following the presentation from Verity, Dan introduced the Viridor briefing lapwing paper that was circulated to members of the CAMC ahead of the meeting. This paper had been prepared to outline the history of lapwing at the Farmlands noting their relatively steady population.</p> <p>Dan commented that following guidance from Viridor’s lapwing and wet grassland consultant alongside Marcus Kohler when suitable habitats are available at the Farmlands, the lapwing have found nests and successfully bred. Viridor’s contractor on wet grassland habitat, Roger Wardle who has extensive experience in the creation of wet grassland habitats in the UK, had noted that he is confident if the wet grasslands are seeded and fenced appropriately – lapwing could be present on the site next year.</p>	<b>DW</b>
<b>3.2</b>	<p>There was a discussion around the lapwing being a symbolic species for the Farmlands with Derek Coleman noting that predators were of key concern to the success of the lapwing. Derek noted that foxes were present, but there was speculation that the ongoing large population of gulls was also potentially impacting the lapwing. David added that Viridor needed to take all measures to support boosting the productivity of the lapwing breeding on the site to support the viability of the colony.</p>	
<b>3.3</b>	<p>David Warburton commented that the foxes have displayed a learned behaviour to swim across to the lake islands and that, in line with most nature reserves, predator management would be required to support lapwing breeding success David cited that the small number of foxes displaying this behaviour may need to be removed from the population.</p> <p>Dan Cooke responded that Viridor would not be advocating population management. Cllr Green confirmed that she was not a supporter of fox hunting and that if there needed to be a cull of the foxes at the Beddington Farmlands there would need to be a reassurance that this would be undertaken in a humane manner. David noted that most nature reserves operated humane solutions for managing predators to protect target species.</p>	
<b>3.4</b>	<p>It was agreed that management of predator and pest populations would need to be discussed at the Conservation Science Group. Cllr Andrew asked what other stakeholder bodies, including the RSPB, would suggest for this solution. David noted that most nature reserves operate a form of predator control, hand in hand with anti-predator fencing .</p> <p>There was a discussion around the importance of a suitable predator fence being installed to protect the newly created wet grassland, as well as around the northern lake. Adrian confirmed this was intended to be installed this winter.</p>	
<b>3.5</b>	<p>It was also agreed that management plans for the islands and Phase 1 &amp; 2 wet grassland were essential to provide optimal habitats for target species</p> <p>Andrew updated that Viridor had produced a short video with the support of the Beddington Farm Bird Group to highlight the progress made on the wet grassland habitat creation project to fulfil the RMP. A link would be included in the minutes:  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kSrBCKp67kE&amp;t=1s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kSrBCKp67kE&amp;t=1s</a></p>	

<b>4.0</b>	<b>Update from the Beddington Farmlands warden – first 60 days</b>	
<b>4.1</b>	<p>Charlie Owens delivered a short update on his time at the Beddington Farmlands. He noted that he was still understanding the complexities of the site but had met with a number of stakeholders including Marcus Kohler and the Beddington Farm Bird Group.</p> <p>A delegation from Viridor, the community and London Borough of Sutton had visited the Thameside Nature Reserve in Thurrock to learn more about footpaths deployed across a former landfill site.</p> <p>Charlie noted that there was a lot of work that needed to be progressed this winter including the completion of phase 2 &amp; 3, north lake island clearance, installation of water control &amp; monitoring infrastructure and installation of adequate anti-predator fencing.</p> <p>Charlie had developed a matrix of activity that he suggested to be completed to support the activity and habitat creation work. It was noted that weather conditions may contribute to the extent of these works being completed.</p>	
<b>4.2</b>	<p>There was a discussion around the role of volunteers on the Beddington Farmlands to support the programme. Adrian and Dan noted that Viridor were focusing on delivering the major engineering project along with closing the landfill site before volunteers could be considered. Adrian noted the health and safety concerns of introducing volunteers onto the site.</p> <p>Charlie highlighted that volunteers could contribute to saving money for Viridor. Charlie confirmed he would like to develop and deliver community engagement programmes on the Farmlands before Christmas along with volunteering opportunities. It was discussed that the Beddington Farm Bird Group could also receive greater access under Charlie's ambition to facilitate more tours across the site. Charlie stated that to achieve this, Risk Assessments and access arrangements would need to be agreed by Viridor.</p> <p>It was suggested that if members of the CAMC knew of members of the community who might be interested in visiting the Farmlands, they could contact Charlie directly.</p> <p>It was agreed that Viridor and the London Borough of Sutton would meet to discuss the roadmap to enabling volunteering work on the Farmlands.</p>	
<b>4.3</b>	<p>Charlie also commented that interpretation and engagement would be an important part of his role, building a brand for the Farmlands. Andrew and Dan noted this would be very important although suggested this might be an activity that could follow in the coming years.</p>	
<b>4.4</b>		<b>AF/D W</b>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Viridor report on the COVID-recovery programme</b>	
<b>5.1</b>	<p>Adrian updated the CAMC around the COVID-recovery programme and that the ongoing COVID outbreak was still impacting on Viridor's ability to mobilise contractors to the site and complete the works as required. This should be noted with a potential wider lockdown around the second wave being discussed by Government.</p> <p>Adrian noted that element of the COVID-recovery programme would be covered in the subsequent items of the meeting.</p>	

	Further to the earlier conversation around the sludge management programme work continues to support the historic sludge drying beds.	
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Public access strategy for the Farmlands and working group</b>	
<b>6.1</b>	<p>Andrew updated the group that following on from feedback on behalf of the local community and the London Borough of Sutton, Viridor had withdrawn its application to relocate the Sustrans quality cycleway from the landfill site to the route of the existing permissive footpath.</p> <p>Andrew summarised the current consented access elements on the Farmlands including the permissive footpath, Sustrans quality cycleway and the mown permissive footpaths on the meadowland.</p>	<b>AT</b>
<b>6.2</b>	<p>An access strategy working group had been established to discuss the access aspirations of the community and potential ways to enhance access at the Farmlands. Lysanne Horrox and Tom Sweeney noted the first meeting of the working group had been well received and Viridor had a number of actions to progress ahead of the next meeting.</p> <p>Andrew confirmed that alongside the access strategy working group reviewing the longer term objectives of the Farmlands access for the community, Viridor was seeking to resubmit a more detailed application to relocate the Sustrans quality cycleway from the landfill site to the route of the existing permissive footpath.</p>	
<b>6.3</b>	<p>There was a discussion around this proposal, with Cllr Andrew noting that he would not want to sacrifice a good standard permissive footpath and lose a community asset if a suitable pathway was not placed across the landfill site as a replacement. It was noted that Viridor would be prepared to commit to exploring an east/west access on top of the existing consented access for the community.</p>	
<b>6.4</b>	<p>Viridor would be holding a pre-application meeting with the London Borough of Sutton to discuss this further. There was concern from members of the community that progressing the cycleway before agreeing the wider access elements might result in the community losing high quality access to the Farmlands. Andrew noted that Viridor had intended to deliver the relocated cycleway in 2020 before the planning submission was withdrawn.</p> <p>Alongside the habitat creation projects, it would be intended that public access to the Farmlands would be granted once these habitats establish and the works are complete from 2023, the cycleway project was intended to be a quick win and early community benefit associated with the project.</p> <p>Lysanne asked Viridor to reconsider this approach and to work with the access strategy working group before resubmitting any proposals.</p> <p>Viridor took the action to share details of the proposed surfaces that could be used at the Farmlands, and even prepare prototype surface ways for review.</p> <p>Viridor also took an action to revert to Lysanne &amp; Normans map of E/W connectivity to share proposed ways to integrate access onto the Farmlands into this work. Still outstanding.</p>	
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Acidic grassland habitat update</b>	
<b>7.1</b>	Adrian confirmed that Viridor is pleased to have finally shared the acidic grassland laboratory report, this had now been shared with the CAMC and CSG for review. Adrian noted that Viridor had also shared this report with Thames Water for their review, as landowners, at the time of writing this briefing there had been no feedback.	

	<p>It was confirmed that Viridor had held concerns over the ability to which an acidic grassland can be delivered and sustainably managed at the Beddington Farmlands given the methods needed to suitably acidify the base soils and the impact this may have to the sensitive habitats and river Wandle. You may also recall that a similar consensus was reached at the Beddington master-planning session held earlier this year.</p> <p>Adrian shared Viridor’s current position is that the creation of the acidic grassland is not viable at Beddington for the following reasons.</p> <p><b>Deliverability</b> – the report finds that delivering a suitably acidic baseline for the soils at Beddington is technically achievable. However, the report noted that the variability of the soil structure in the laboratory trials found some samples were acidified to a much greater degree and others saw much greater levels of leaching.</p> <p><b>Ecological impact</b> – whilst the acidic grassland was prominent in the original planning conditions in consent granted to Viridor’s preceding operators at Beddington, our concerns and the laboratory trials have noted that acidifying the soil base may result in leaching of acidic chemicals into the River Wandle and wider watercourses. We know that the Wandle is sensitive chalk stream habitat and Viridor would under no circumstances condone actively impacting this habitat by creating another.</p> <p><b>Sustainability</b> – As you know delivering the habitat is only the first stage, and the need to potentially revisit the acidification process in the future is also a concern. Whilst Viridor is committed to delivering the network of high-quality habitats at the Farmlands, revisiting the acidification may be resource intensive and may lead to onerous obligations upon Thames Water and other parties in the future.</p> <p><b>Achieving the best results for the Farmlands</b> – we know that the Beddington Farmlands welcomes an assemblage of farmland and wetland bird species which are drawn to the historic sludge management activities. Viridor also feels that creating an acidic grassland may not be the best use of resources and deliver the best suited habitat to the Farmlands based on current knowledge and experience, where additional, perhaps more sustainable, wetland habitat may be of more use for the target conservation species.</p>	
7.2	<p>There was a short discussion around the alternatives for this habitat. Viridor would seek support from the CSG and CAMC to confirm that the project will now focus on securing an alternative habitat. It was agreed Viridor would prepare a list of alternative habitats to share at the next meeting.</p>	AF
7.3	<p>David noted that he had outlined, verbally to Viridor, that there needed to be full justification for any deviation away from acid grassland. Although David accepted the points made, the acidification of soils is achievable, and mitigation was suggested within the report. David also highlighted that this could include a thicker attenuation layer (&gt;150mm) but this had implications in terms of where this material would come from and the cost to do so. Therefore, it was necessary to fully explore and cost out how the site could be acidified, including modification and potential discharge of highly dilute leached elements, into the MEC (as suggested within the report). This required an initial discussion with the EA as to what, if any, acceptable levels of leachate would be.</p> <p>David noted that acidic grassland was highly prized as an ecological habitat in Sutton and London wide. David outlined that any deviation from acid grassland would require a new planning application and as such, would be evaluated against current policies. His initial calculations, as a ‘worst-case scenario’, suggested significant down-trading from acid grassland to a habitat likely to be more sustainable and deliverable, such as increased meadowland. LBS specifically prohibits down-trading of habitats and, as such, a compensation payment would be required, of c.£13.5 million to deliver offsetting</p>	

	<p>elsewhere within the borough. David further outlined that MKA Ecology were working on what could be achieved on site to maximise valuable habitats (particularly wetland areas) and, therefore, reduce the value of any compensation payment. There was a discussion around what this could mean for the Farmlands.</p> <p>Dan Cooke reminded members of the masterplanning meeting in February arrived at a consensus that should the habitat of acidic grassland not be achievable then a suitable alternative would be found. Dan noted that Viridor did not recognise the compensation figure suggested by the London Borough of Sutton. David stated that it did not matter if Viridor did not recognise the figure, that was the figure from his initial calculations, under Sutton's adopted planning policies.</p>	
<b>8.0</b>	<b>Wet grassland habitat update</b>	
<b>8.1</b>	<p>Adrian confirmed that Viridor was continuing to be advised by wet grassland expert – Roger Wardle and will seek his views on fencing the phase one habitat to give it every chance of success of attracting lapwing.</p> <p>Viridor is shortly to mobilise contractors to clear the ERF construction car park and to complete the bulk excavation of phase two and Roger Wardle will be onsite to support forming the islets and channels of this area.</p> <p>Adrian noted that he was hopeful; however, weather may be a constraint, of starting the work to form the phase three habitat towards the south of the site.</p>	
<b>8.2</b>	<p>Viridor is also exploring retrofitting some existing pumps that formerly pumped water from the Main Effluent Carrier Channel into the recycling compound to now pump water into the northern wet grassland.</p> <p>Towards the south of the site, Viridor has looked to contain waterflow from the southern channel (that feeds the lakes) to establish the volumes of water that could be controlled to feed the wet grassland.</p>	
<b>9.0</b>	<b>Bird hide artistic installation</b>	
<b>9.1</b>	<p>Andrew confirmed that following the graffiti of the bird hides over the summer of 2020, Viridor had engaged with a local artist to share ideas of the ways to engage with the local community to deliver an artwork installation that connects the community with the bird hides.</p> <p>Christina Peake (a local Hackbridge based artist) was invited into the meeting to present her ideas of how schools and the community could feed into the project. Christina shared her ideas to engage local members of the community, school groups and interested parties to create an inclusive art installation within the Farmlands bird hides. Christina mentioned that whilst living in Hackbridge she has been involved with similar projects across the world.</p> <p>Simon Latham commented that this was an excellent idea and it was agreed by members of the CAMC that Viridor should continue to progress this project and keep the CAMC updated.</p>	<b>AT</b>
<b>10.0</b>	<b>Any other business</b>	
<b>10.1</b>	Dan Cooke shared a short update on the KKR acquisition of Viridor to build upon trade media coverage confirming that the American company is conducting a review of the	

<p><b>10.2</b></p> <p><b>10.3</b></p> <p><b>10.4</b></p>	<p>Viridor portfolio. Dan noted that this would not impact on services provided by Viridor to the South London Waste Partnership, or to the Beddington Farmlands project.</p> <p>Cllr Foster noted that CAMC members had fed back on the Restoration Roadmap, this had now been published on the Viridor website and will be shared with the CLG meeting (also occurring this evening). It is intended that the roadmaps are replaced in the bird hides.</p> <p>Andrew confirmed that Charlie and Derek had worked since the last meeting to develop a pilot interpretation board for the northern most bird hide overlooking the wet grassland. This brings together ideas from the stakeholders with an interest in the ecology of the Farmlands and will be shared with the members of the CAMC. It should be noted that the wider interpretation strategy will form part of the access strategy working group, but at this time, the pilot information will act as a useful way to gauge feedback from the community.</p> <p>It was noted that since the last meeting a delegation of members from the London Borough of Sutton and Viridor visited the Walthamstow Wetlands. Cllr Foster noted that this was very valuable to understand the lessons learned and transferrable opportunities for the Beddington Farmlands. Viridor has now held a follow up meeting with the London Wildlife Trust to understand potential areas of collaboration in the development of the vision and interpretation of the site. Simon Latham confirmed he understood the visit was very valuable.</p> <p>David Warburton added that a meeting had taken place with Thames Water’s consultants Aquatic Engineering. Rosemary confirmed that the meeting between Viridor, representatives of ProLogis and Thames Water was helpful, but the team needed to review the information prepared by the consultants before sharing this more widely. The next steps would be sharing the holistic water management plan with the CAMC.</p>	<p><b>RW</b></p>
<p><b>11.0</b></p>	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting</b></p>	
<p><b>11.1</b></p>	<p>Following a discussion, it was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be the 10<sup>th</sup> December 14.00, Viridor would monitor and observe the Government guidance around meeting in person, however it would likely be held via Microsoft Teams.</p> <p>Dan Cooke finally commented that he would be leaving Viridor, Cllr Foster thanked Dan for his support and efforts in recent years around the Beddington Farmlands project. It was agreed that Paul Rowland would attend future CAMC meetings from Viridor.</p>	<p><b>AT</b></p>