

BEDDINGTON CONSERVATION SCIENCE GROUP
Minutes of Meeting

Date : Friday 4th September 2020; 10:00-14:30

Place : Google Meet

Present:

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| David Warburton [DW] | London Borough of Sutton (Chair) |
| Adrian Frost [AF] | Viridor Waste Management |
| Marcus Kohler [MK] | MKA Ecology |
| Derek Coleman [DC] | Sutton Group of London Wildlife Trust |
| Roy Dennis [RD] | Beddington Farmland Bird Group |
| Simon Chalcraft [SC] | London Borough of Sutton (Planning Enforcement) |
| Charlie Owens | London Borough of Sutton (Reserve Warden) |
| Ian Crump [IC] | Thames Water |
| Jonathan Downs [JD] | Viridor Waste Management |

1. Apologies

Martin Boyle (Mitcham Common Conservators).

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

from the June 'catch-up' meeting were covered under the agenda items. The minutes from June were agreed as accurate.

→ **DW to forward June minutes to Andrew Turner for entry onto Viridor website by 11/09/2020**

Update: completed 04/09/2020

NOTE: All actions are summarised with progress in the [Action Tracker](#)

3. CAMC update

AF provided a recap of the CAMC held on 17 August. Minutes of that meeting are linked.

One outcome of the CAMC was to create a focus group to discuss access to the site over the next few years.

DC referred to Dan Cook's comments at the meeting about how it may not be possible to create acid grassland.

4. Site Restoration Update

A. Meadowlands -

a. landform remediation

- i. AF outlined that the leachate pipes crossing the meadowlands have now been buried, with the trenched areas requiring seeding. However, teams are coming through in the next month or so to pull cables through, so, final seeding is unlikely to be achieved this year
- ii. The depression is to be included on the contract of wider site works to fill with c500m³ of soil to create the required profile
- iii. The slump on the western face, opposite the southern lake, requires further investigation to remediate.

b. General management

- i. significant time has been spent on spot treating goat's-rue and other pernicious weeds, inside and outside the paddocks.
- ii. All of the paddocks and paths are subject to cut and collect and should be finished on the 4/09/2020.
- iii. The equipment supplied by the contractor was not suitable for cutting the slopes of the landform, so need to pursue other options to deal with preventing further scrub and weed encroachment.
- iv. The newly capped area at the top of the landform will be sprayed to remove weeds (mainly bristly ox-tongue) before being rotovated and seeded in the next couple of weeks.

B. Grazing

- a. JD met with Rare Breed Survival Trust on 3rd March 2020 to discuss grazing.
- b. RBST have only recently issued a [report](#).
- c. JD recapped the main discussion points.

Action → CSG to review and comment on report by end September 2020

- d. JD had not been in touch with the local grazier used by the London Borough of Sutton (Downlands Partnership), contact details of which

- had been provided by DW.
- e. DW suggested that a site meeting with the Downlands Partnership of

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JD, DW and CO within the next month would be vital in determining what the constraints of the infrastructure fencing may have on grazing not just the meadowlands but other habitats.

Action → CO to arrange meeting w/c 28/09/2020

C. Wet Grassland

a. Phase 1

- i. Roger Wardle was present on site from 11 Aug 2020 to create the microtopography, reduce depths of lateral channels, create gravel islands and increase sinuosity of the main feeder channel. Images [here](#).
- ii. Higher areas and roughly 50% of the banks had been seeded. iii. RW suggested that the banks could be seeded with the acid grassland mixture (as there are a number of catholic species that would take to these conditions), as well as [20 additional species](#)
Action →AF to complete seeding before end September 2020
- iv. MK stated he would like the CSG to note the contribution of RW under very difficult conditions to complete the microtopography in such a short time frame. This was seconded by DW.
- v. AF stated that control weirs for the lateral feeds needed to be installed.
- vi. AF also stated that there appeared to be a 'leak' around the outfall to the MEC overflow but this could be just percolation through the bunds and gravels
- vii. The blocked channel to the north needs removing
- viii. The water levels need to be dropped by about 75mm (as the sudden rain and continuous pumping to top up the wet grassland had overfilled it), as some shoots were coming through, possibly from the seeding. This needs careful monitoring to ensure that undesirable species are quickly removed.
- ix. RW suggested a pipe with a gate valve be installed to manage water movement between compartments.
- x. Control of the water levels will be critical.
Action →AF to install water gauging boards ASAP.
- xi. It is a requirement that a pumped water source will be required for Phase 1 and Phase 2, as there is no feed from the river

terrace gravels at c.25.0mAOD. This needs installing for both phases, to ensure there is sufficient water on Phase 1 and part of Phase 2 for the 2021 breeding season

Action →AF to install water pumping solution ASAP.

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b. Phase 2

i. AF stated that Phase 2 had been partially excavated around the ERF constructors compound and that comments from RW had been sought as to design of the first stage (prior to removal of the IVC tunnels in later 2022)

ii. AF planned to have his contractors drop the level to 26mAOD then bring RW back to deliver the design and microtopography, if the CSG was happy with this approach.

iii. DC stated that he was happy to continue with RW's designs. He considered that we must implement one design and could not afford to waste more time on which design to adopt. The CSG agreed this was the best course of action, in regards to using RW's significant experience and due to the now severe timeframes for getting wet grassland established on site.

Action →AF to get design from RW for Phase 2

Update → [design](#) provided 7 September

iv. MK commented that with the now apparent total loss of tree sparrow from around the pylons, his preference was to remove scrub, the fenceline and relocate serviceable tree sparrow boxes to other parts of the site, to create an open vista for breeding waders.

v. DW commented that he agreed with this approach and would prefer to see all of the area under the pylons reduced in height as far as possible (AF noted that the MEC run underneath here, so full removal was not possible) and then seeded with a meadow mixture, to provide refuge and additional forage area for grazing animals

vi. DC commented that with the lack of tree sparrows in this area (and probably locally extinct from site), he had no issues with this proposal.

vii. RD concurred with DC view but wished to register the BFBG's dismay at the loss of tree sparrow from the site, which they felt was entirely avoidable.

NOTE: The tree sparrow population crashed in 2012 and had maintained very low levels of breeding pairs until 2020

viii. AF also stated that he planned to remove scrub along the MEC

overflow, again ensuring, as far as possible, open views for waders.

- ix. DC commented that there was a bund he thought should be removed and would show AF where this was.
- x. AF confirmed that with approval from the CSG all of the area under the pylons and along the MEC overflow would be removed and levelled.

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c. Phase 3

- i. AF stated that the site was at 28.5mAOD but the water level, fed from the river terrace gravels, was slightly lower (c.28mAOD). The feeder reedbeds in the southern channel graduate water from 28mAOD in the SE Corner to 25mAOD in the southern lake
- ii. RW is to work on designs for Phase 3, after approval for Phases 1& 2 is given by the CSG
- iii. As per Phase 2, the CSG agreed to having RW undertake the design of this area and to oversee the microtopography and island creation.
- iv. One of the main concerns for this area is a flood event from the Wandle Overflow (from Beddington Park).
- v. AF proposed that the southern channel be modified from being a 'v' shape to a wider channel (expand by 4-5m) to reduce the flood bore.
- vi. The CSG discussed the creation of a small holding pool or reservoir to catch and hold any flood waters, to then flow north and south around Phase 3.
- vii. AF is to create a pool area by the turn along the southern channel to dissipate flood water velocity and provide a feed to Phase 3 via a control mechanism.
- viii. The CSG mentioned the possible extension west of Phase 3. This area narrows between the landfill and southern channel, so may feel very restricted for waders. However, extending west may necessitate the removal of the feeder reedbeds and the installation of a new control weir.
- ix. DW commented on AF's discussion with RW about the mature(ish) trees along the southern channel, which would need to either go or be heavily reduced in height, so as to remove predator perches overlooking Phase 3. DW asked MK and DC if there would be any constraints to this.
- x. MK commented that common passerine species (such as chiffchaff, thrushes and wintering finch flocks) would be

impacted. MK agreed that the area should be cleared
xi. DC stated he had no issues with the removal / reduction in height of these trees.

D. Acid Grassland

a. AF had received a draft report from GeoChem and had a conference call with them on Tuesday 1/09/2020, when the report was promised to be sent across on Tuesday evening or, at latest Thursday. This had still not arrived by the time of the meeting and was, in the opinion of AF, well overdue.

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- b. AF stated that GeoChem needed a water analysis of the river terrace gravels to help inform the qualitative risk assessment. The analysis Viridor already does was not sufficient for GeoChem's requirements. Samples were then taken from the south of the site and northern lake and sent for analysis.
- c. Unfortunately, the testing lab had equipment failure and results were only returned to Viridor at the end of August and then forwarded on to GeoChem for incorporation to their report.
- d. AF stated that the testing results showed a significant difference in water quality, with the SE Corner sample having more elements (possible leaching of sludge into the gravels?) than the sample as water was exiting the site through the northern lake (possible nutrient stripping / element sequestration in organic matter and silts?)
- e. AF then noted that the draft report stated there was significant variability in the buffering levels of the 'virgin materials' sampled (bulk dig of Phase 2 wet grasslands) with the 'as placed' capping deposits
- f. If the underlying proposed 'buffer zone' of 150mm is not of the correct buffering capacity, then the soil would continue to acidify and would then leach off the landform to possible receptor zones (river terrace gravels, northern lake and MEC Overflow)
- g. MK stated that this was likely to be a highly fraught habitat to showing a highly variable habitat with different soil ph and the reports are showing the difficulty of delivery of this habitat. MK asked AF if he had spoken to the EA about this yet. AF confirmed he hadn't.
- h. DC stated that in the light of Dan Cook's comments at the CAMC and that although we seemed to be coming to the final lap for the acid grassland, the CSG should have a cut off date by which a final decision is made, otherwise this could continue to trickle on
- i. DW proposed the December CSG.
- j. DC agreed with the general proposal for December CSG but that the CSG would need to discuss with the CAMC well before that date. k. RD agreed with DC and asked if there would need to be continual monitoring of the substrate and if so, would there need to be any further

applications to re-acidify the ground over the years?

- l. DW responded that this may be so; the ferric sulphate should be quick acting and may need a slower reacting agent (like brimstone 90) to be added to ensure long-term stability but it would need continual monitoring.
- m. DW then asked AF if the final report would provide all of the necessary information to make a considered judgement on the viability of acid grassland and provide a 'step-by-step' guide to delivery
- n. AF stated that this was not the case, that the report would identify the risks and constraints but not offer solutions as to what needed to happen if the CSG and Viridor tried to pursue the creation of acid

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grassland.

- o. DW then asked if the delivery of a solution would require a separate set of contractors.
- p. AF confirmed that it would.
- q. MK then commented that if acid grassland was not delivered, we needed to look with an holistic eye as to possible replacement high quality habitat that is deliverable before the next CSG. MK has concerns on how this can be achieved
- r. RD agreed and was firm that the CSG (or a sub-group) needed to consider alternative proposals that could be made to the CAMC, if acid grassland really wasn't viable and sustainable.
- s. DW then asked SC to expand on how, if acid grassland was not deliverable, the planning process would need to be addressed as a major change in the delivery of the site.
- t. SC stated that a full application or a S73 (which would effectively be a full application but linked to the previous application) would be required.
- u. This would be a good opportunity to incorporate any other changes (such as hide locations, changes to the southern channel etc.) and have them all agreed at once.
- v. MK commented that if there was an opportunity for additional wetland, particularly to the east, then this would be positive.
- w. RD commented that there may be the opportunity of 'offsetting' from the loss of acid grassland to ensure the displacement habitats (100 Acre and SE Corner) were maximised.
- x. DW stated that, in his opinion, this would essentially pay Thames Water to deliver their existing obligations to manage these areas (post 2023 hand back from Viridor), under their own Biodiversity Net Gain policies
- y. DW stated that, if there was a planning application seeking change from acid grassland, this would need to be assessed against Policy 26

for No Net Loss.

z. DC was very keen that any offsetting remain on site, as off-site habitat creation had been mooted at the CAMC and stakeholder meeting in February.

aa. DW stated that the delivery of the scale of offsetting required would be very difficult to achieve elsewhere in the borough, due to size constraints.

Action → ‘Task and Finish Group’ set up to discuss possible alternatives to comprise DW, CO, MK, RD, DC, JD and AF.

CO to arrange meeting date for late September / early October NOTE: DW’s post-meeting [calculations](#) suggest that there would be a significant disparity in delivering, say, an extension to the meadowlands (which would be much more deliverable and sustainable), which would require an offset of the creation of

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another 56ha of grassland or, a ‘biodiversity tariff’ payment to LBS to deliver offsetting, of over £13million.

E. Autumn & Winter Works

a. Island proposals

- i. DW and MK skimmed through the proposals for the main lake islands within the MKA [document](#).
- ii. DW had previously recommended the clearance of all islands and the clearance / reduction in height of all trees within 100m of each island to no more than 2m high, as far as possible.
- iii. RD had reservations about clearance of the SW island, due to the numbers of wintering snipe and jack snipe there in 2019/20
- iv. MK stated that there was alternative habitat on site and that although there may not be as many birds concentrated in one place, there should be negligible overall impact.
- v. MK was concerned about possible impacts on breeding little grebe and suggested there was some literature that supported breeding little grebe success on the edges of rafts (which would also, possibly, help common tern on site, although see previous minutes in regards to common tern viability on site).
- vi. The CSG agreed to strip all of the islands but to retain Eland’s Island intact and assess in 2021 and subsequent years, if it appears to be acting as a predator perch.
- vii. AF stated that there may be access issues to clearing and adding gravel to the NW Island but they would see what can be done.
- viii. AF needs to create new causeways to the islands enabling them to be stripped and gravelled.
- ix. The stripping will be undertaken under a watching brief from

RW

- x. The CSG briefly discussed the weir within the southern lake causeway
Action → AF to remove willows from causeway and repair weir (if necessary) and remediate causeway to prevent water bypassing the weir.

b. Water control & levels

- i. Water controls and levels had been generally discussed during the meeting around the wet grassland creation and for the islands.

- ii. One item that needed addressing was that the weir within the feeder reedbed in the southern channel needed investigating to ensure it was working correctly and fixing, if necessary.

Action → AF to fix feeder reedbed weir

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- iii. All weirs require water gauging boards installing, to ensure water levels can be regularly monitored and adjusted as necessary to provide optimum habitat conditions at the right time of year, as well as to allow the necessary management (such as drawdown to access the reedbed).

Action → AF to add gauging boards to all water control structures before spring 2021

- iv. A meeting is arranged for 22/09/2020 to discuss water availability for the whole site (including displacement habitats), as well as the new 'Beddington Lane Ecology Reserve at Pongo Park.

c. SDEN

- i. **Action → Discussion between CO, DW and AF as to what needs to happen over autumn and winter needs to be had by mid-October**

d. Southern channel

- i. There is substantial regrowth of cut willows.
- ii. DW suggested that this could be a good volunteer task for CO to lead on

e. Reedbed - no work undertaken since March

Action → AF plans to translocate rhizomes from the southern channel and heel them in. CO offered to assist in this

Action → existing 'coot excluders' are broken and need to be removed

f. 'Orchard'

- i. **Action → Discussion between CO, DW MK and AF as to what needs to happen over autumn and winter needs to be had by mid-October**

F. 100 Acre & SE Corner

- a. MK presented his updated [plans](#), based on the initial BFBG suggestions.
Action → Comments back to MK by 18/09/2020
Update → RD provided [comments](#) for the BFBG on 14 September. MK provided clarification / comments on the BFBG comments on 15 September. The combined BFBG & MK response is provided
Update → DC provided [comments](#) on 17 September
Update → Displacement habitat discussion arranged for 21 September
Action → MK / CO to provide minutes / notes of actions points for the meeting
- b. AF, in his discussion with Tonka (previous employee involved with sludge management) had discussed the possibility of a series of pipes

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from the 'motherbed' in 100 Acre, to 'weir' to other beds, so that the 'motherbed' would be pumped full and allowed to overflow to other beds, rather, than as at the minute, trying to pump to individual beds to wet them.

- c. The CSG agreed that this sounded like a sensible solution.

5. Predator and Goose control

- A. RD stated that he had no issue with fox control
- B. DC agreed that there were no issues from him around this, it was just the mechanics of how it could be done
- C. MK stated that fox control could be undertaken through careful culling and that TW may have undertaken this previously on site.
- D. IC confirmed that, certainly for other sites, they had mainly undertaken earth blocking, to prevent reentry to site using one-way gates
- E. AF stated Viridor's current position in regards to culling of foxes, that culling would be a very last resort.
- F. DW stated that Viridor would be damned if they don't cull foxes, thereby affecting the viability of lapwings and other target species and probably damned if they do cull foxes. It was just a matter of which would provide the worst reputational damage and DW was of the opinion that not taking the necessary preventative course of action was worst, as almost every breeding wader site managed for conservation undertook some level of predator control.
- G. The CSG also discussed the impacts of Canada geese on site and particularly on the newly created and seeded Phase 1 wet grassland. Their 'paddling', nest occupation and dominance, faeces and seed and shoot

predation will have a significant impact on the development of this habitat if not controlled.

H. It is likely that Beddington Farmlands is the main breeding hub for the Wandle Valley and goose control is [recommended](#) at Beddington Farmlands. I. DC also mentioned the issue of rising numbers of Egyptian geese and whether corvids were likely to require control.

Action → AF needs to discuss with Viridor that this is likely to be a necessary evil (fox and goose control) that needs to be undertaken, otherwise there will be significant negative impacts on target species and habitats.

6. Site Monitoring

- A. RD commended that there was a general lack of access to the BFBG, particularly on weekends. This was due, in part, to having to arrange access the day before and having to sign in at the Beddington Lane entrance, rather than being able to access from the permissive path.
- B. MK commented that he was very sympathetic to how difficult the present conditions were for enabling effective birding at the site, but that Viridor

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management were still concerned over the risks of having people on site, especially in light of recent events

- C. MK suggested that RD and the BFBG put together a proposal for safe access to the group that the CSG could support, given the importance of site monitoring that the BFBG provide.

7. Thames Water

- A. **Action** → Beddington Farmlands West entrance confirm ownership and future plans
- B. Aquatic engineering site walk & talk meet arranged pre-feasibility study for watering solutions at in-filled lagoons.
- C. **Action** → Aquatic Engineering report on feasibility of watering solutions for northern 100 acre and southern SAM site.

8. AOB

- A. Warden
 - a. Charlie Owens was introduced as the new Reserve Warden, having previously been employed at London Wildlife Trust, mainly working on Walthamstow Wetlands
- B. Cycle path & Access
 - a. AF has met with Sustrans to discuss possible issues raised by LBS but has not had any feedback from them.
 - b. E-mail received by AF 04/09 at 17:02 from Sustrans:
"Apologies for the late response, the ethics committee took longer to get

back to us than anticipated. Unfortunately their decision is that we will be unable to work together on this specific project. They stated the following reasons."

"The charity noted the efforts the company were going to in order to improve walking and cycling facilities on the site, however on a stand-alone project we felt that it didn't align with our wider strategic plans to improve walking and cycling facilities in the region and decided against involvement"

Action → AF and Access T&F Group to discuss where this leaves Viridor's information gathering on 22/09/2020

9. Date of next meeting: Friday 4th December 2020.

The meeting will be at 10.00 am, either in a large enough room within the ERF to socially distance or via Google Meet.

Action → DW to send out calendar invites

Update: Sent 10/09/2020

With no further business, the meeting closed at 14:30

No site visit was undertaken, due to the remote nature of the meeting Page 12 of 12