

BEDDINGTON CONSERVATION SCIENCE GROUP
Minutes of Meeting

Date : **Friday 5th February 2021; 10:00-15:15**

Place : **Microsoft Teams**

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 (CO) | London Borough of Sutton (Reserve Warden) |
| Ian Crump [IC] | Thames Water |
| Jonathan Downs [JD] | Viridor Waste Management |

1) Apologies

Martin Boyle (Mitcham Common Conservators), Muriel Alix (Viridor Waste Management), Rory Roche (MKA Ecology)

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

Actions from the December meeting were covered under the agenda items.

The minutes from December 2020 were agreed as accurate.

Action → **DW to forward December minutes to Andrew Turner for entry onto Viridor website by 15/02/2021**

Update: completed 10/03/2021

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

3) CAMC update

The December CAMC discussed acid grassland, proposed changes to the

permissive path & wider site access and community artwork: [CAMC minutes](#)

4) Site Restoration Update

a) Meadowlands

- i) MK leads the update and begins thanking DW and DC for their comments on the CSM 2020 report shared at the December CSG
- ii) Following on from those comments a meeting was held with MKA and LBS to discuss the options for progressing with the report with consideration as to how future reports will inform habitat management.
- iii) MK is confident that from this meeting that MKA now has a new way to present data and therefore a way forward.
- iv) MKA are now working on a revision of the CSM report so that future reports are more accessible, so that it is more analytical and less descriptive in nature.
- v) MKA are now liaising with CO and DW to create a better, more deliverable and repetitive monitoring method.
- vi) DW asks for AF to provide an update on intended spring management
- vii) AF states that there are no plans as yet and wants the site to be dry
- viii) DW says a spring cut is likely to be essential to control problematic species such as bristly oxtongue and goat's-rue. Significant amounts of herbicide application and/or rotivation will be required to reduce the weed burden.
- ix) MK agrees but adds that this should be done in conjunction with Acid Grassland soil preparation, tith/stone burying. MK also suggested that RW should be brought in to provide a consultation on the 2021 meadow management.
- x) DW suggests that a meeting in March / April would be useful to align these and look at spring management
Action → CO to organise possible meeting date for late March / early April, depending on conditions
- xi) AF would like to see a management plan that looks at the area holistically and not confined to the three paddock areas.
- xii) At the CSM meeting held 03/02/2021 with MKA and LBS, discussions were had about the selection of positive and negative indicator species. At the CSG, MK asks for feedback on these species from DW and CO early next week once they have been emailed over.
Update → this email has been received by LBS on Monday 8th February
Action → DW and CO to provide feedback on these.
Update → DW provided comments 08/02/2021
- xiii) CO asks if Viridor intend to remove the paddocks before spring to enable holistic management
- xiv) AF agrees that this would be the best course of action to enable contractors to manage holistically and reduce costs.

- xv) DW notes that paddock fence removal is a long term action (end of July) for Viridor but asks if this can be brought forward?
- xvi) AF says that fencing/paddock alterations as a concept are connected to the permissive pathway alterations currently being explored and put into a planning application.
- xvii) DW asks CO to put together a meadow management plan and that MKA sends over the previous NVC data to enable this.
Action → CO to prepare a Meadow Grasslands MP

B) Grazing

- i) DW provided a quote from the Downlands Partnership to Viridor on 26/01/2021 and asks if Viridor have had the time to review and consider that quote.
- ii) JD and AF confirm that they have received this and reviewed it.
- iii) DW acknowledges that the quote, at first glance, seems high but provides context to justify on behalf of the Downlands Partnership. There are always ongoing costs. The Downlands Partnership are currently operating at capacity so that in order to provide stocking densities required for effective grazing, to ensure the five freedoms and management of that stock for Beddington Farmlands, they would need to hire an additional member of staff. The quote provided covers these costs.
- iv) DW continues to say that LBS pays a contribution fee to the Downlands Partnership and then 'hires' in stock, spending up to £[redacted] per annum on grazing. He again agrees that the quoted figure of £[redacted] is not an inconsiderable sum but reminds Viridor that it is only c.3 times the amount that LBS spend for far less grazing hectareage.
- v) DW asks AF to share his opinion.
- vi) AF confirms that he has shared this quote with other site aftercare stewards within Viridor to obtain feedback as a first instance and that this feedback has not yet been provided.
- vii) MK asks if there are other grazing sources that Viridor could explore and consider.
- viii) AF confirms that this is being done and that other Viridor sites have similar agreements with graziers.
- ix) MK mentions that London Wetland Centre (LWC) carry out livestock grazing on some of their wetland habitats and say that he will enquire with the site manager there as to their agreements.
Action → MK to contact LWC before end February 2021
- x) AF is keen to find a quick but effective solution to this as RW advises that Phase 1 wet grassland should have active grazing from April to May at the latest.
- xi) DW suggested that AF discuss with Downlands Partnership the possibility of setting up a pro-rata agreement and the possibility of two or

three head in the immediate / short term.

- xii) CO confirms that the Downlands Partnership had previously mentioned that the short term grazing of two or three head may be viable under current capacity but this would require further exploration

Action → AF to discuss short-term pro-rata capacity with DP before end February 2021

C) Wet Grassland

i) Phase 1

- (1) AF begins by screen sharing aerial images of 100Acre and the Wet Grasslands taken in December. Most of the displacement beds have surface water and the wet grasslands show high water levels.
- (2) AF zooms into aerial view of Phase 1 (P1) which shows the current conditions. Water looks to be murky, sandy and silty and the majority of the island's surfaces appear black from the level of avian faeces and presumed algae.
- (3) Viridor has engaged a contractor to install the channel weirs into P1 East & West. These tilting weirs are of a similar specification to those already installed and will control water feed into and out of the east and west sub-compartments into the central channel. These will be installed close to the outfall weir to enable ease of management and will reduce disturbance to avifauna while making adjustments during sensitive times of year.
- (4) AF confirms that gauging boards have arrived but the site is too flooded to install them. AF liaising with contractors to ensure that they correspond to the mAOD data and weir settings.
- (5) AF keen to install the P1 board in the centre of the west compartment.
(Question... how many boards are there for P1? One for the channel and one each for E & W?)
- (6) AF reminds the CSG that there is only around 300-400mm worth of control within P1 and once levels are above the 400mm mark water begins to fall back into the northern lake.
- (7) The northern lake will have 2m boards which should provide data in flood conditions (that are currently occurring on site).

ii) Phase 2 & 3

- (1) AF updates that the main ERF build is complete but there are still minor outstanding 'snagging' issues and their car park is due for demolition. Progress on Phase 2 (P2) will be unable to progress until this compound is gone.
- (2) In April the ERF will be running servicing which requires shutting down parts of the facility. This will take place in April, last around a month and require extra contractors on site. One of the submitted

plans is that the compound atop P2 will be used and postpone demolition

- (3) AF is pushing for an alternative so that the demolition can continue as planned. He has quotes for the full removal of the compound.
- (4) MK asks if that the ERF shutdown will lead to the landfill re-opening to deal with the, presumably, un-incinerated waste.
- (5) AF says no, the landfill will not re-open. Instead the waste is likely to be tipped into the, considerably large, holding pits within the facility. He goes on to explain that one side of the facility is shut down at a time, so that there is an ongoing waste process at all times. Prior to the shutting down of half the facility, the waste within the pit will be exhausted creating enough storage capacity.
- (6) When the facility is at capacity, residual waste will be picked up and taken elsewhere or diverted to an alternative facility.
- (7) MK asks if there will be an increase in the amount of litter around the refuse station
- (8) AF says that no this should not occur. Operatives must keep their areas clear of litter. Litter accumulated outside of their operational area must be cleared within 24hrs and litter within must be cleared within 48hrs.
- (9) MK raises that any increase in 'open waste' will lead to an increase in gull numbers.
- (10) AF states that this closure will not lead to an increase in waste, rather that it may lead to a small amount of exposed waste for short periods of time.
- (11) Phase 3 (P3) is understood to be completely underwater at this time.
- (12) AF is looking to engage a contractor to complete the bulk dig excavations to begin once the site is suitably dry.
- (13) Once the bulk dig is complete RW will oversee a different contractor to deliver the ditches, channels, inlets, islands and moat.
- (14) AF hopes that by September Viridor will be in a position to seed these (P2 & P3) areas, although he raised concerns about weather conditions often seen in September. Viridor's aims are to address the majority of this land forming phase of the wet grasslands during the summer months.
- (15) Similarly weirs will be installed to control water to these areas
- (16) CO notes that he has noticed a discrepancy in the hectareage of proposed wet grassland in the RMP (14.57ha) to what's being delivered on site at this moment in time. The areas that are currently being created as wet grassland only total to around.....
- (17) MK says that this is not the first time this issue has been brought to the CSG but has never been resolved.
- (18) AF suggests that the simplistic drawings for the planning

application may be the cause of the disparity.

- (19) AF responds to CO/MK that ultimately Viridor are constrained by the size of the site and that the area below the Pylons (between P1 & P2, as shown in the RMP map, are part of the wet grassland and as such should be accounted for in the cumulative sum
- (20) DC agrees with this interpretation and that AF is correct. Area underneath the pylons is designated as wet grassland.
- (21) AF restates that the footprint of the site is the determining factor and that there may not be sufficient space for expanding the wet grasslands.
- (22) DW states that the area under the pylons is not wet grassland as per the RMP definition but has been proposed as a series of pools and channels to create a moat of wetland habitat around the landfill.
- (23) MK asks AF for a projected start date for these works and whether or not they will clash with breeding season, pointing out that, in its current state, P3 could support breeding little ringed plover. MK asks if the plan is to have wet grasslands delivered by the end of 2021?
- (24) AF states that Viridor are aiming toward P1 and P3 to be fully excavated and that all the water control and monitoring infrastructure is in place by June 2021. RW will then follow on in August - September to create the seedbed (alongside that of the acid grassland area) ahead of any September/October flooding.
- (25) DW follows up that we would prefer to see Viridor attempt to have everything created for seeding in mid to late August, as there have frequently been wet conditions in September that delay progress into the next year. Avoiding this scenario again is essential to delivery
- (26) AF agrees to the later point.

D) Predator Fencing - AF/JD

- i) AF shares a map of the revised fencing proposal for Phase 1 only, attempting to leave Phase 2 free for works as soon as the area is dry..
- ii) AF is looking to have the perimeter pegged out before installation and feedback on position of gates has been sought from graziers.
- iii) AF states that Viridor has not had a huge amount of interest from contractors, especially with the electrification of the fence. Many of the contractors they have engaged with were suppliers only.
- iv) The contractors that have attended the site have provided quotes to undertake the work.
- v) AF shares a few illustrations indicative of the specification with which they have been pursuing, which is more akin to an otter fence as this was suggested by multiple contractors as it serves well for foxes. The specification selected has reduced maintenance costs as there are no

- electrified wires.
- vi) The electrification of anti-predation fences is complicated and requires regular maintenance.
 - vii) Contractors have given lead times of two to four weeks.
 - viii) RW has commented that in his opinion creosote posts should be used as this can extend the life of the fence as much as up to three times standard treated softwood.
 - ix) AF has made initial contact with suppliers of these but delivery time can be up to four weeks.
 - x) MK, in conjunction with RW, think that this should be ok from a timing perspective but only if action is made in the immediate future. Restates that progress has to be made quickly.
 - xi) DW adds that when a meeting was held with RW, he mooted the idea of installing a 'tripwire'. This is a plain wire that is set a foot or two from the base of the fence to prevent foxes taking a 'run up' before a jump.
 - xii) RD would like to know where the predator fence comes into contact with the bird hide and whether or not the hide will form part of the fence.
 - xiii) AF says that the intention is to run the fence on top of the bank until it reaches the eyeline of the hide, where it will then go down the bank to be about a foot or two from the waters edge, and rise back up the bank thereafter. This has been done to ensure that the fence does not impede the sightline for those using the bird hide.
 - xiv) Using the hide as part of the fence had been considered but the hide viewing holes would not be secure as a fox could easily leap or clamber through the window gap.
 - xv) AF adds that the fence line running along the north side of P1 is temporary as this will need to be expanded to encapsulate P2 to create one large management compartment when P2 has been created.
 - xvi) DC asks if the proposed waters' edge section of the fence in front of the bird hide would provide a fox with enough of an advantage to jump over in front of the bird hide.
 - xvii) MK says that foxes are more likely to need to clamber and thinks that a jump would be unlikely given the gradient of the slope, angle of the bank and fence. Though a larger 'top overhang' in this area might be beneficial. This area will require some problem solving and an eventual bespoke solution during the build
 - xviii) DW says that this is where a trip wire might prevent a 'run and jump'. Anything to interrupt a run and jump would be beneficial.
 - xix) AF agrees and says that he will look at a retrospective solution for fitting this sort of addition.
 - xx) CO asks if there will be a conservation/ecology oversight of the placement of this fenceline once it has been 'pegged out'.
 - xxi) MK says that he hopes CO will be able to do this (COVID-19 circumstances pending)

- xxii) RD asks if there is a plan for a similar fence around the northern lake
- xxiii) AF responds no. The plan, in the first instance, is to get gauging boards installed which should enable better water management to provide the solution to fox predation here.
- xxiv) MK states that RW is the opinion that having much more open islands means foxes may be less inclined to try to predate, due to increased visibility levels
- xxv) AF has images from the lake creation that shows the 2m ditches around the circumference of the lakes that was done to prevent foxes accessing islands.
- xxvi) MK asks who AF has sought advice from in regards to the final fencing specification
- xxvii) AF confirms that he has consulted with Graham White. In short Graham White said that there is no fence that will be 100% effective, though electrified fences would be beneficial. However, given the visual impact that would be created from a fully electrified fence, the specifications shown provided a sensible alternative.
- xxviii) DW mentions that the gate in the images **(To be provided)** does not have a crank at the top and that this would be required.
- xxix) AF agrees saying that the image provided was the only example available.

Action → AF to add specs, images and maps to these minutes.

E) Autumn & Winter Works

i) Water control & levels

- (1) AF shows images of the northern lake outfall flooding. These high levels from flood water have prevented progress, though they will be helping to control weeds on the islands.
- (2) High water also meant that the tern raft on the East Central Island floated free. Viridor staff were then able to pull it out of the water. It is now sat at the end of the MEC overflow.
- (3) AF informs that when water levels are this high, the team has no control over levels, as this is dictated by the height of the Wandle.
- (4) AF moves on to P1 images that show flooded conditions. No islands are visible and the levels will not drop until the level in the Wandle does.
- (5) As previously mentioned, gauging boards have arrived on site but installation is delayed by flood conditions and inability to empty the waterbodies.
- (6) RD asks for clarity on the lack of control of the flood conditions
- (7) AF confirms that Viridor has no control in these circumstances. Viridor have the ability to raise the northern lake outfall weir, which allows the levels to rise around a metre above 'normal' conditions.
- (8) Under high water conditions, like those we are experiencing now,

the discharge from the northern lake is controlled by the height of the River Wandle. Therefore water is retained in the lake as the Wandle levels are too high to allow a flow out of the site. The northern lake outfall weir is linked to P1. Viridor have the ability to retain at least 1m of water above the islands, and is the same as the other wetland areas.

- (9) RD notes that the outfall weir has been previously blocked with litter and was this currently the case and asks if the grills are regularly cleared.
- (10) AF has asked the on site team to keep all weirs cleared of litter and vegetation and has had the inverted siphon inspected for blockages. AF admits that this could be an option as the last check was a few years ago but that the grill if the front of the weir is clear.
- (11) CO asks for people's opinion on providing clarity to the general public regarding water control, or there by lack of in storm conditions.
- (12) MK says that this has been done before
- (13) DW adds that interpretation boards within the bird hides could outline the constraints the site faces in regards to water level control in storm conditions.
- (14) MK asks if CO can use social media as a line of communication about the issues and that the message needs to be that the Farmlands water levels are dictated by the conditions within the Wandle.
- (15) AF suggests that this message could be added to the interpretation board currently under review
- (16) CO and DC say that the initial interpretation board is in the final stages of development and that adding in messages at this late stage would not be beneficial. The message however will be added into consideration for a wider communication strategy.

ii) SDEN

- (1) DW says that in the last email communications there were concerns that changes in species mix suggested in the Planting Proposals might require planning changes. Asks AF to clarify
- (2) SC adds that he is happy for the work to go ahead as the changes are negligible and that with the approval of those involved no planning changes required.
- (3) AF says that Viridor's planner would just like a formal agreement that an alternative tree species is agreed by all parties.
Action → SC to email Viridor's planner
Update → SC emailed 04/02/2021
- (4) SC asks if all the proposed changes are in one document
- (5) CO confirms that this has been done and has been provided

- iii) Southern channel
 - (1) The southern channel is in a similar situation with high water levels. The vegetation on the banks remain but AF states this will not affect or impede the progress of P3 in the summer months.
- iv) Reedbed
 - (1) The high water levels have delayed Viridor's ability to carry out reed translocation works and removal of vegetation on the causeway.
 - (2) The levels in the south lake and reedbed areas mean that Viridor are also unable to carry out repair works on the weir or repair the bank.
- v) 'Orchard'
 - (1) CO updates that 70 trees have arrived today and that the onsite team are preparing for planting for today and early next week.
 - (2) [Images of trees and site conditions](#)
- vi) Hedgerows and scrub
 - (1) DW reminds all that there are quite a lot of whips that will need replacing, mainly along the eastern flank northern lake and around the northern lake hide
 - (2) AF aware of the northern lake line but not those near the hide. AF plans to address the hedgerow planting when the hardstanding pathway is created around the northern lake. He is also aware that an amount of fence damage has occurred. AF confirms that the timeline for this work will be path installation in the summer with fencing in the autumn and whip planting thereafter.
 - (3) MK reminds AF that the large tree guards used previously have served as perching spots for larids and corvids who have defecated on to the whips, killing them off, whilst there are few rabbits on site.
 - (4) AF's reasoning for the large protection was to prevent predation from geese rather than rabbits.
 - (5) Alternative solutions for protecting these whips will be sought nearer to the planting times

F) Spring and summer works

- i) Sacrificial crops MK/DC
 - (1) DW would like to know what the intention is for the creation / management of sacrificial crops, with the loss of tree sparrows from site.
 - (2) MK view is that granivores are still likely to use these habitats though he admits that the site is moving more towards wetlands as opposed to one supporting farmlands species. MK says that there is

a risk that the site has lost much of its area for granivores to feed and that the house sparrow population has declined since the temporary cessation of supplementary feeding.

- (3) MK is also cautious that the linnet population on site may decline if sacrificial crops are lost altogether and affirms that we need to ensure that the right balance is obtained on site to support those populations.
- (4) DC agrees with much of what MK says and adds that it is difficult now that the tree sparrow population is gone. DC recalls that in the early years establishment of these sacrificial crops was problematic but things have improved with higher uptake of sown species. DC would like to see retention of some areas of sacrificial crops but that this must not impinge on the wet grassland areas, saved primarily for the landfill slopes and that retaining linnets and reed buntings is necessary. DC is happy to consider a reduction in sacrificial crop areas.
- (5) AF says that Sacrificial Crops were previously on the Acid Grassland area.
- (6) MK agrees and introduces the idea of taking this away to find suitable areas for sacrificial crops away from the Acid Grassland slopes
- (7) DC adds that there is still so much to be delivered on site at this time that Sacrificial crops should not be top of the priority lists but it should retain its place as an agenda point.
Action → AF, MK, CO and DC to choose suitable locations for sacrificial crops 19/02/2021. Purchasing of crops would follow thereafter.
- (8) RD asks if the area where the northern lake feeders are would be a suitable location for the establishment of a sacrificial area.
- (9) MK accepts that this is a possibility but adds that this area is one of the few well established grassland swards and has a good invertebrate population and is particularly good for small heath butterflies. The area is one of the few undisturbed areas on site. MK would need to look at that area in more detail.

G) Displacement Habitats

i) Turning work

- (1) MK presented the latest [update](#), which is detailed [here](#). The sludge bed operator is now sending regular photo updates of the work undertaken. The presentation shows bed succession and that the reclamation of some beds has been successful over this winter period.
- (2) With bed conditions as they are now, and will be leading into spring, MK and the sludge management operator will be able to provide a

better presence of work over the spring. This will enable focus to be on maintaining habits in a better way than in previous years.

- (3) Bed 73 has proved to be the most challenging bed to reclaim. This bed in 2020 had three lapwing territories but by the end of April all three are thought to have been lost to predation. A significant amount of effort has gone into reclaiming this bed with a joint process of sludge turning and watering. A pump has been installed from the Cemetery Ditch and is switched on daily for a number of hours. The hope is that this bed has now reached its saturation point which should enable the bed to hold surface water for longer during the spring.
- (4) The cake field south of bed 73 is undergoing some level of experimentation. Surface vegetation has been scrapped off with a slight depression created in the centre of the bed.
- (5) MK has been enquiring with Frampton Marshes about their management of redshank populations. Advice from Frampton is that areas favoured by redshank are quite rich grasslands with thin channels of water in shallow ditches.
- (6) MK is working with the sludge operator to explore the plausibility of creating a network of thin channels, inlets and pools.
Action - MK and CO to look at the possibility of creating more suitable redshank habitat
- (7) Other options include planting sacrificial crops on clam press beds, then flooding in winter to create overwintering areas.
- (8) MK updates on 100Acre - shows aerial image of the 148/147 large bed creation highlighting the increase in open vista. While this is positive work, MK affirms that we now need to start considering the area holistically and modifying what's available to serve as valuable habitat for other target species such as redshank.
- (9) A network of pipes have been installed giving the ability to fill areas.
- (10) Conditions are that bed 148 is so saturated that it is now feeding adjacent bed 149.
- (11) MK advises that before further joining work is undertaken the best course of action is to survey these new conditions to better understand how summer conditions will affect these larger areas.
- (12) Reeds have been transplanted from 161.2 to 160.2.
- (13) MK goes on to say that we now need to ensure that in Autumn 2021 we need to come up with a management plan that creates suitable habitat for a wider range of the target species.
- (14) Significant improvements have been made to the nature lake. The island has been cleared of vegetation, the east bank has been reshaped and 'pushed eastwards'. The conditions in this bed are now far more suited to lapwing breeding potential.
- (15) DC agrees that with all the success of lapwing habitat creation

that reshank should now form a part of the management aims, though he admits that they require a very different type of bed management. DC suggests that the baseline of a 'lapwing bed' is a good place to start but consider having many small islands, rather than a few large islands, as on a lapwing bed. Planting vegetation on the islands would be beneficial. He suggests that beds would then need to be left for the vegetation to develop rather than turned annually; such beds could form experiential redshank beds and if they were successful these could be replicated elsewhere.

(16) MK agrees that this makes sense but adds that keeping them wet is crucial.

(17) DC adds that beds previously good for redshank were beds with standing water and lots of vegetation

(18) MK and DC discussed the possibility of manipulating a bed in 3-corner field for redshank.

(19) DW mentioned that it was important that IC be involved in this process, as TW have to continue management after 2023.

Action → DC, MK and CO to meet onsite if possible

Action → MK to communicate with PC from BFBG about the works by 19/02/2021.

H) Acid Grassland

- i) AF update - there is considerable differential settlement over the area at the movement. Viridor are looking to get contractors in to realign and shape the area in preparation for the seedbed. There is still an amount of surface infrastructure (about 100m of gas main that is surface lain) that needs burying and infilling to prevent puddling.
- ii) AF would like to manage the whole area to create a suitable tilth working with RW to create a management plan for a sterile tilth. This will then be seeded with the initial sward mix in the RMP (ESG2 mix) to create a binding sward to reduce erosion. Without this binding sward the soils will continue to be washed down the slope.
- iii) DW asks AF to clarify which mix it will be used.
- iv) AF intended to use the nursery sward as shown in the RMP but on the advice of RW, they now intend to sow with the full mix (EM7)
- v) DW readdresses the conversation from the last CSG about the disparities of seed mixes. DW advises that Emorsgate would need to be consulted though he is of the belief that mixes remain relatively consistent over the years. Any changes within the mixes are suspected to be percentages based rather than large species changes.
- vi) AF says that they contacted the RMP authors about the seed mix disparities. No answer has been given at this time.
- vii) MK adds that he recalls that the RMP mix may have been adjusted to create a more 'catholic' species composition.
- viii) DW asks for a progress report on the involvement of the EA.
- ix) AF responds that at the current time the EA are very difficult to get a hold of nationwide and that they are not responding to many country wide issues. AF has raised complaints.
- x) AF updates that MA is looking to contact a professor with experience of the acidification of rivers. MU is a researcher in aquatic ecology.
- xi) AF engaged with Earthcare Technical and shared with them the [Geochem Report](#). Expanding on the detailed qualitative Risk Assessment to present to the EA. This RA will address the potential impact acidification may have on the watercourse. Together the plan is to produce a report that can be provided to the EA in order to speed up the process.
- xii) DW checks that this RA would include the v-ditch option proposed in the Geochem report and, as part of this RA, would there be a cost analysis for deliverability. i.e how much would it cost and how effective would it be.
- xiii) AF says that this is not the purpose of this RA but rather looks at the discharge of contaminated water into the Wandle.
- xiv) DW restates that he would like to see the v-ditch included in this process, if a move away from acid grassland is required, to ensure all avenues have been explored.

- xv) AD says that he can produce a 'ballpark' cost for the v-ditch
- xvi) DW asks if this is the case would the v-ditch be within budget and would we then require a bespoke permit.
Action → AF to produce a v-ditch cost
- xvii) AF says that his main concern is the discharge of contaminated water
- xviii) AF goes back to soil preparation and confirms that the aim is to provide a suitable tilth by Autumn 2021.
- xix) DW asks for an expansion of these plans
- xx) MK says that there is considerable work to be done in dealing with the weed burden and to bury the stones.
- xxi) DW suggests that as soon as the site is suitably dry would be the ideal time to undertake primary cultivation, followed by a second cultivation to reduce the weed burden.
- xxii) MK is working with RW to create a management brief for 2021 to bring all of these elements together. He is concerned that soils must be turned at the right time and that lack of on site equipment leaves this open to slipping of critical timings for this work.
- xxiii) DW asks if there are any timeframes for this work
- xxiv) MK says that a meeting took place but COVID is creating issues for site attendance of key individuals, especially RW.
- xxv) AF has sent images to RW but there is a strong desire from him for a site visit to properly inform management.
- xxvi) AF confirms that work is unlikely to start until April/May.
Action → AF/MK/RW/CO (&DW?) to attend site meeting April(ish) to determine course of action

5) Predator and Goose control

- a) AF updates - There was a pest controller on site on 4/02/2021 from 20:00 to 06:00 on 05/02/2021 and reported back that they had monitored an area from the MEC overflow to northern Grid. During their observations 12 foxes were seen leaving and returning, presumably towards the food waste tunnels, and three foxes traveling back. 15 foxes were counted in total
- b) Observations spotted significantly less individuals than in previous years.
- c) AF shares images of the fox holes on the north bank of P1 below the pylon. The pest controllers advice was to install the anti-predation fence first and remove the foxes thereafter.
- d) Viridor now has an understanding of where the foxes are (in relation to the wet grasslands P1) and where they are going.
- e) MK said that during bat surveys he would often see up to 30 animals but last year he recalls seeing only 5. MK hopes that the site can maintain a small population but we must get them out of the P1 footprint.
- f) DC asks what the plan is for removing them from P1 and whether or not shooting is being considered.
- g) MK responds that he believes that this is what is being proposed. Another

option would be to install a one way gate but this is more costly. Exclusion is a possibility but this would be a long process and is not guaranteed to work, as the foxes could just move on a few meters and start again. He believes that the pest controller is suggesting to install the fence first and dispatch of the foxes thereafter.

- h) AF would like another survey to build up a better population estimate but ultimately understands that installing the fence, followed by dispatch is the likely process.
 - i) DC then asks about goose control and that he does not see it as a primary issue. DC is concerned about the flood conditions of the site and whether or not it will be dry enough in time for lapwing nest prospecting. Also significant concern about the number of gulls on site and that P1 has become a loafing area for large aggregations
 - j) MK agrees that gull numbers have risen again, from around 300-400 to 1000.
 - k) DW again floats the idea of installing curtains on the IVC (food waste tunnels)
 - l) DC agrees that the sooner a solution is found the better. Curtains would need to go up quickly to try to lower gull numbers during wader breeding season
 - m) DW reminds all that the IVC is due for demolition in December 2022.
 - n) DC accepts that the chances of them being installed would be argued against, for economic reasons.
 - o) MK says that while he accepts the economic argument for not being installed, we as the CSG, should ask the question
 - p) AF says that the increase in gull numbers is the main concern but asks why the numbers would be rising if nothing has changed at the IVC. Other Viridor sites use bird scaring kites and other methods to reduce the amount of birds.
 - q) DW asks AF about the bird scaring measures Peter Walker was supposed to buy from a couple of years back.
 - r) AF responds that he has no idea if these are on site
- Action → AF to check with PW & site staff if there are any bird scarers on site**

6) Site Monitoring

- a) MK updates - apologies that the final annual report has not been sent yet but finalising is just a matter of logistics. Thanks go to DW and DC for comments that have helped to move things forward and plans to send through next week.
- b) Overall teal numbers are higher than they have been for several years and many of these birds have been aggregating in the settlement lagoons. 250 there and around 150 in 100acre. MK suspects that this could be a matter of redistribution due to island clearance on the northern lake rather than population increases but pleased to see that many on site nonetheless.
- c) Green sandpipers number around 10 in December and now to around 7. Granivore numbers are down generally and the linnet flock has dispersed, with food availability being the suspected cause for the change.
- d) Waterfowl seem to have dispersed and reduced in number, possibly in

response to the high water levels experienced at the moment, though a total of 45 pochard present is higher than most years.

- e) Lapwing are around the 30 mark
- f) Further records from MK are provided in [Appendix 1](#)
- g) RD says that the BFBG has nothing to add due to site access issues. However, RD has noted that the perimeter fencing by the gate at hackbridge entrance has been broken into and that it is now possible to walk into the site. Notes that while a temporary repair has been made it is not sufficient. The same has happened at 100acre and that he would like to see an improvement in the quality of fencing.
- h) MK states that observations from the BFBG are very important to provide an holistic view of species on site. MK raised the prospect of an app for BFBG access.
- i) AF requests photos and asks if these issues have been raised with the onsite team. AF will follow up with the onsite team to address the issues.
- j) RD goes on to say that he would like to see a relaxation of the currently restrictive access to the BFBG. Would like to see access to 100acre from the permissive path reinstated.
- k) AF responds that his greatest concern at this point is that current site conditions are dangerous and first response would be difficult.
- l) CO apologises letting access issues slip and commits to exploring the possibilities with the on site team.
Action → CO to raise access with the onsite team and incorporate BFBG roles into the Volunteering Roadmap
- m) CO is speaking with TB of the BFBG about barn owls. TB has put in an application for funding for nest cameras and is working towards a permit for access

7) Thames Water

- a) IC updates - tree planting carried out around the STW in hedgerows and small pocket planting areas.
- b) TW are changing the management of their meadow areas within the STW.
- c) IC shares an aerial view of the STW site.
- d) MK says that the small lake has potential to host breeding tufted duck and thinks that with appropriate management this could provide some benefits. A reduction in the amount of edge vegetation to create a more open vista would be easy to achieve.
- e) DC confirms that tufted duck have previously nested on the small island.
- f) DW states IC & Thames Water need to comment on the 100 Acre and SE Corner discussion and asks if the displacement habitat management is likely to continue.
- g) IC responds that he has been working towards obtaining agreements for the area but TW have not yet provided them and that there is no

confirmation from the central business team that these areas will have long term or ongoing habitat management. IC thinks that if the CSG were to increase pressure TW might be more responsive.

Action → CAMC to raise with Thames Water

- h) DC asks if there are any plans for the humus tanks. There is a substantial quantity of *Salix* spp. that has grown over the years. Some of the beds used to be dominated by reed and have previously hosted bearded tits. Would like to know what can be done to retain reed in some of the beds.
- i) MK adds that the southern portion still has a large amount of reed dominance
- j) CO asks if a work permit (TWOSA) can be granted to enable surveying of the TW area.
- k) IC says a TWOSA can be issued for this purpose
Action → CO to follow up with IC/TW
- l) RD asks if IC updates can be further up the agenda
- m) All agree that this is not a problem should it need to be moved for convenience.

8) AOB

A) Warden update

- i) Charlie provided an update on works during other agenda items and adds that LBS and Viridor are now having weekly catch-up meetings, that he is working on a 'Roadmap' to volunteering.
- ii) CO mentioned that he has received survey methodology on lapwing monitoring from MKA Ecology and plans to go ahead with 'something', as yet to be fully determined.
- iii) AF stated that he had had a discussion with the EF about using s106 monies from CO's contribution to pay for tools and would like a list of items that would be immediately required.

Action → CO to provide brief tools list to AF by 19/02/2021

B) Cycle path & Access

- i) AF updates - Shows map with access proposals that are part of the permissive path re-developments. Images show different pathway surfaces that are being considered, but specifically, hardcore/gravel self binding surfaces.
- ii) The plans show that the permissive path is to have an upgraded surface that will replace/improve access into the bird hides along that pathway.
- iii) As part of the SDEN remedial works, meadows were created along the permissive path, though these have not taken. With this in mind, the route will be re-configured to create a 'desire line' along part of the pipeline.
- iv) The new cycleway will end at the northernmost hide where

- anti-cycle barriers will be installed preventing/discouraging cycling north beyond that point and ultimately onto Mitcham Common.
- v) The route around the northern lake will form a circular route and the same will occur around the southern lake. The entrance for the southern lake loop will be south of the reedbed.
 - vi) Due to the landslip on the eastern bank of the south lake, the area will need to undergo a level of remediation to repair the issue. At this point in time, it provides an opportunity to create a terraced and more gradual slope along this side of the bank.
 - vii) The proposals have largely been accepted. AF still has to produce technical specifications and drawings with surfacing details. All of the paths are to be crushed gravels/hardcore surfacing. AF points out that the RMP requires one 'Sustrans specification' cycleway and mown pathways only and therefore, this represents a significant upgrade on the RMP.
 - viii) AF aims to have the planning work complete by the end of the month and that the Permissive Path works will have been delivered by the end of the summer 2021.
 - ix) In addition, AF is working towards producing an accessible northern lake loop by the end of the year.
 - x) RD asks if cycling will be permitted on the main site
 - xi) AF clarifies that cycling will only be permitted on the permissive pathway
 - xii) RD then asks about public access to the south east corner and if there are plans to create this
 - xiii) AF responds that this route has been considered in the development stages and is still very much an option. This forms a part of the discussion about east/west access and that TW, LBS and Viridor have all agreed to commit to exploring the possibility of providing the east west access.
- Action → AF to add the map to these minutes.**

C) Nest boxes and bird feeders

- i) AF informs that the tree sparrow nest boxes around P1 need to be taken down. He asks if there are more that need taking down and what should be done with them
- ii) MK responds that relocation would be the best case scenario as they still serve other species. He adds that the management of the nest boxes would (under normal circumstances) fall under the warden role with the assistance of volunteers. Mk feels that we do not need additional boxes, we just need to manage those that we have effectively.
- iii) AF asks if the boxes taken down from P1 should be stored in a shed for the meantime.

- iv) DW says yes, take them down, store them and when CO is able to, they will be relocated around the site.
Action - CO to reinstall bird boxes as soon as practicably possible
- v) MK says that all feeders, bar the one by the northern lake, are no longer being filled and that without tree sparrows on site there is very little requirement to continue feeding. MK suspects that the cessation of feeder stations being filled may be connected with the reduction of house sparrows. He goes on to add that filling bird feeders as has been previously done is very expensive, especially at a time when the on site team needs to be shown to be economical.
- vi) MK thinks that the best course of action is to continue to fill the northern lake feeder and that the other stations are closed
- vii) DC begins by saying he is unsure of the best course to take. He feels that the withdrawal of the northern lake feeder would lead to disappointment among the birding community but we could consider switching to winter feeding only. On the other hand, if we are to stop feeding another he feels that the feeder station should be removed. On the house sparrow population and relationship with onsite feeding DC adds that regardless of the national decline, house sparrows have never had enjoyed a historical presence on site and that he has no fixed views.
- viii) MK proposes that the northern lake feeder remains and is filled throughout the year and every other station is closed. The house sparrow breeding success and ongoing presence on site will be considered in relation to this action.
- ix) RD asks for details on the cleaning regime for feeders.
- x) CO says that there didn't seem to be a system in place and that he had cleaned them once, late last year.
- xi) RD asks if some of the closed station feeders are relocated close to other bird hides, filled with mixed seed and used to bring people's attention to some of the species on site. This could be coupled with an interpretation board.
- xii) MK says the function of the northern lake feeder has now changed and for that reason we could move it closer to the hide for easier viewing.
- xiii) DW adds that placement of a site warden means that the management of bird feeders will a far simpler and more efficient process

D) Tree Sparrow Report

- i) DC stated that, rather than the initial intention to have his tree sparrow paper including in the 2019 London Bird Report, it would

now go into the 2020 report.

10) Date of next meeting: Wednesday 5th May 2021.

The meeting will be at 09:30 am, either in a large enough room within the ERF to socially distance or via Teams, to be set up by Viridor or Thames Water

Action → JD to set up Teams meeting for next CSG by 19/02/2021

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

Appendix 1

| December 2020 | January 2021 |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 220 teal Settlement Lagoons, 125 teal 100 Acre ● 42 pochard total ● 4 water pipit 100 Acre and 4 SE Corner/Settlement Lagoons ● 50+ shoveler ● Coot numbers well down, gadwall also down ● 8-10 green sands total ● 30 lapwings ● 7-10 skylark ● great crested grebe ● kingfisher ● yellow-legged gull ● escaped speckled teal ● White stork | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 28 lapwing Phase 3, 4 100 acre ● 4 green sands SE corner 2 north of here ● 260 teal Settlement Lagoons. 160 teal 100 acre +4 water pipits ● Jack snipe SE corner, green sand, 3 stonechat on site ● 7 pochard Southern Lake ● 4 pochard Northern Lake +3 stonechats ● Water levels on both lakes are very high and waterbird levels notably low – very low numbers of coot, gadwall etc. ● 1200 herring gulls ● 1300 black-headed gulls across site. ● Adrian the white stork still present , looking forward to spring and lapwing chick food ● Red kite ● 4 water rails southern lake |