

BEDDINGTON CONSERVATION SCIENCE GROUP
Minutes of Meeting

Date : **Friday 6th December 2019; 10:00-14:10**

Place : Viridor Offices, Beddington Farmlands

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)
Rob Favell [RF]	London Borough of Sutton (Planning Enforcement)
Jonathan Down [JD]	Viridor Waste Management

1. Apologies

Martin Boyle (Mitcham Common Conservators)

No apologies were received from: Peter Walker (Viridor) or Ian Crump (Thames Water)

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

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

Grazing. This is an ongoing issue, with numerous actions assigned that have not been undertaken (see, eg. September minutes).

MK, DW & AF met on Friday 29th November 2019 and discussed the importance of grazing the site. However, AF needs to understand the necessary logistics for grazing, to ensure the infrastructure is installed to the necessary specification and in the correct way.

AF stated that this partly sits with the restoration team (Peter Walker) and that AF would pick up with a member of PW's team. MK provided, again, the two grazing feasibility study tender documents from 2017. DW has previously provided contact

details for LBS's grazers.

Action → AF & PW to meet with grazier before 29/02/2019 to understand the necessary infrastructure required.

Otherwise, the minutes from September were agreed as accurate.

→ DW to forward September minutes to Andrew Turner for entry onto Viridor website

Update: completed 09.12.19

3. CAMC update

1. Next meeting is due 12/12/19.
2. DC will be attending for the CSG.
3. DW & SC will be attending on behalf of LBS, to provide any necessary advice as required.

4. Site Restoration Update

1) Meadowlands

- a) Paddocks cut, cleared, scarified and slot seeded in October (no exact dates available).
- b) 'Footpaths between paddocks to be cut, cleared, scarified and seeded in spring (April / May, depending on weather and ground conditions)
- c) RD reported that geese and swans had become trapped inside the fencing of the grazing paddocks, with one swan having had the fencing cut to enable its release. Unfortunately, there isn't really anything that can be done to prevent geese and swans wandering into the paddocks and then becoming confused. The situation will be monitored to determine incidence rates.

Action → RD & BFBG to report all incidences of geese or swans getting caught in the stock fencing

2) Wet Grassland

- a) Phase 1 - AF & MK met Roger Wardle on 14/11/19 to discuss the 'bulk dig' of Phase 1. RW reported that the basic shaping was good, with a requirement for ridges and furrows in a more sinuous design than that proposed by WWT Consulting (Roger Wardle's [map](#)). RW's main concern was how to retain water at the correct levels during the breeding season, to ensure that the site can naturally draw down, exposing lots of muddy edges. RW suggested that a pumping system may be required. Further to the meeting held between DW, AF & MK on the 29/11/19, further information from WWT Consulting in regards projected flood events was provided to RW, who responded to MK that, based on this information, ridge heights may be able to be reduced.

A conversation on the above points ensued. The possibility of having some kind of pump or flow-induced (swan neck) means of accessing water from the MEC was mooted, to enable fine control of the necessary water levels in spring into mid-summer. This would need to be discussed with Thames Water and the EA.

The issue of summer flooding was also discussed, given the events of June 2019. DW commented that it would be imperative to try to maintain Phase 1 or Phase 2 at the correct levels in the event of sustained heavy rain, which may mean sacrificing one Phase, depending on the direction of flow. That is, if the balancing pond from the ERF reaches capacity, that flow has to be released and should be stored in Phase 2, to protect Phase 1 (or vice versa, depending on where birds may be breeding). Conversely, if water levels rise from the south, through the northern lake and the inverted syphon into Phase 1, it may be better to flood Phase 1 to protect Phase 2.

Ultimately, at least 7 tilting weirs will be required (infall and two lateral weirs for Phase 2 and infall, two lateral and an outfall for Phase 1). This would allow water to be backed up at the balancing pond, in Phase 2 or Phase 1, depending on site needs. DW also suggested that some kind of 'pressure release' weir / sluice / piping needed to be created to link to 100 Acre, so that in extreme conditions, at least some flow could be released out of Phase 2.

This also raised the consideration of, if possible, diverting water from the MEC, via the wet grasslands, to 100 Acre, which is severely affected by drying, with knock-on effects on lapwing numbers, as well as the conservation bed and mitigation scrape.

- b) Phase 2 & 3 - AF Plans on replicating, generally, the design of Phase 1 from RW for use on Phases 2 & 3 (although Phase 3 needs hydrological investigation to determine the necessary depths to dig to)
- c) Phase 1 needs contouring and seeding in spring 2020 and then keeping dry for at least 3 years, to allow the soil horizon to start establishing. It is currently difficult to keep Phase 1 dry.

Action → AF to discuss with RW how to create the sinuous ridge & furrow with RW (can this be programmed into a GPS to create or does it require a Clerk of Works to direct all operations?). How is the compost to be integrated?

Action → AF to discuss the possibility of abstracting water from the MEC for the wet grasslands and to wet 100 Acre with Thames Water (13/12/19), with discussions following that with the EA.

- d) AF updated the CSG on discussions with Roger Wardle on their site

visit, around the creation of vistas for waders. RW recommended the removal of trees and scrub in the following areas

- i) Between the northern lake and Phase 1 wet grassland
- ii) Between Phase 2 and 100 Acre (Cuckoo Lane)
- iii) Between the eastern boundary and the Beddington Lane Ecology Reserve (BLER - offsetting site for Prologis in Pongo Park)
- iv) Along the southern channel, between Phase 3 and the southern lake

3) Acid Grassland

- a) AF had an email from GeoChem, the contractors charged with investigating the acidification of the capping but no full report has, as yet, been produced, which is essential to understand the lab tests and any possible field trials.
- b) GeoChem also suggested that spraying ferrous sulphate and rotovating in would be a suitable and swift means of achieving the same aim but have not supplied any information on how this would work, in terms of percolation, longevity, mobilisation of metals etc. Ferrous sulphate was not suggested as part of the initial investigation tender document, so it's inclusion at this stage may lead to further delays, as the efficacy of it is understood.
Action → AF to keep pressure up on GeoChem to get a final report on the lab tests and additional information on ferric sulphate by 21/02/2020.
Action → MK to speak to Mel Kemp at RSPB Minsmere if they evaluated the possibility of the use of ferric sulphate
- c) AF reported that some of the lab trials had dropped in pH to around 2, probably due to variabilities within the sample material. A pH of 2 is too low, the acid grassland and heath needs to be around 4.5 - 5.5.

5. Long term plan

- a) [2019/20 winter works](#) - AF presented the proposed programme for the winter works
 - i) Clearance of crack willow along the southern channel
Action → chippings to be left in 2-3 large piles, to be collected and removed from the site, not broadcast, where there is a risk that they may root and exacerbate the problem
 - ii) MK suggested clearance of willow around the SW corner of the southern lake. RD pointed out that this is good habitat for teal and other species. DW suggested that, depending on the amount, rotational coppicing could be employed to control expansion but provide the necessary conditions
 - iii) Lakes and islands - after significant discussion, it was agreed that

although there would be impacts on wintering species, such as snipe and jack snipe through clearing islands, (particularly SW), their purpose is for breeding waders and the specific conditions they require are not being achieved. As such, the islands will receive the following work (see **Figure 1**)

- 1) NW island - leave
 - 2) NE island - small works to remove vegetation
 - 3) West central island - small works to remove vegetation
 - 4) East central island - remove willows
 - 5) South west island - clear all vegetation
 - 6) South east island - remove willows
- iv) Southern reedbed - AF plans on digging out reed from the southern channel and translocating the rhizomes to the reedbed. DW suggested that clumps 1m*1m should be utilised, if possible, and then put together in clumps of 5-7. This *should* help prevent excessive grazing by wildfowl, allowing the reed to regenerate and expand but exclusion fencing may still be required.
- v) SDEN - following the site visit in October where many whips and standards had died and aftercare had not been sufficient, AF proposed buying the complete suite of whips and standards again. The logic behind this is that rather than undertaking a specific inspection of all tubes and standards, then reporting back on that for what needed to be purchased, then planting, it made sense to buy it all, replace what was necessary in each section and then plant any remaining whips or standards on Beddington Farmlands, as replacements for any deaths there.
- vi) Tree sparrow boxes - bramble to be cleared around boxes on the NW of the northern lake, along the MEC and in the NW of 100 Acre.
- vii) 'Orchard' - given that there is no necessity to plant trees for human consumption (given possible contamination issues), a wide suite of native berry and nut producing species can be procured and planted. This area is good for sedge warblers, so rotational scrub removal (no more than 1/3rd) needs to occur to allow planting but not create too much disturbance.
- b) [5 year work plan](#)
[5 year work plan map](#)
Action → Comments back to AF before Christmas [All]

6. Site Monitoring

- a) MK provided the Common Standards monitoring report. MK highlighted that there was a general increase in the amount of grass vs. herbs across the transect route, with some plots (specifically Quadrat 3 moving from 30% undesirable herbs to 100% undesirable herbs. Couch grass is also

increasing.

The conclusions are that management of the meadowlands needs to be improved and specifically tailored to ensure the delivery of a high quality habitat. Grazing would assist.

Action → Comments back to MK by 10/01/2020 [All]

- b) MK provided the draft Annual Ecology Report. The main messages were that there was a 13% decrease in breeding territories, declines in all target species territories, except for reed warbler, which maintained the same levels as 17/18 and that 100 Acre and SAM site had significant reductions in wetland species, demonstrating the rapid drying of these habitats.

Action → Comments back to MK by 24/01/2020 [All]

- c) DC commented that there were lots of finches on site, as well as good numbers of gadwall and teal (c.200 teal on 100 Acre)
- d) RD noted a few tree sparrows on the feeder by the wet grassland

7. Thames Water

- a) No one from Thames Water was in attendance.

DW followed up on the below action on the 1st November:

→ **IC / AI to clarify TW plans for infilled lagoons by 15th November**

IC responded on the 15/11/19 that

'I've not had any confirmations about the future of the infilled lagoons so apologies I cannot confirm anything further.'

I'd propose some grassland seeding and hedgerow planting to create Tree Sparrow focused habitats. There has been some discussions around fencing, access and future maintenance but no confirmed direction we are ready to publish or consult on.'

The CSG then discussed the best possible use of the old settlement lagoons for the site.

The consensus is that a series of pools, seeking to link Phase 3 wet grassland with the SAM site and the Beddington lane Ecology Reserve (BLER) at Pongo Park would be the best solution.

The consensus was to be raised at the next CAMC as a recommendation that should be put to Thames Water.

It was noted that teal and mallard had been using a pool on the western edge of the old lagoons and that increasing wetland habitats around the perimeter of the site was vital for creating open visits and a varied suite of opportunities.

8. AOB

- a) SDEN: As per the winter work programme.

Action → AF requires PW's modified planting plan

Update: DW provided this on 9/12/19

- b) Warden: DW provided an update on the warden vacancy, that a conditional offer had been made to a promising candidate but that they failed their HR Audit, so had not been appointed.

DW had undertaken some slight revisions to the wording of the advert and job description to make it clearer what was required but needed to meet Viridor to thrash out what work Viridor would permit the warden to undertake on site. It is likely that the advert will go out again after Christmas.

- c) Cycle path & Access: AF updated the CSG on conversations Viridor had been having in regards the cycle route through the Farmlands. Since the hides went in and the permissive path was reopened after the SDEN works, there had been a number of comments in regards the state of the path and the accessibility of the hides, even given that the permissive path had never been a metalled track. Given the necessity of the creation of a substantial dogleg to make the cycle path accessible up the landfill, the differential settlement of capping, that the proposed route would have to punch through the existing woodland belt into Beddington Park and the LBS had no money for creation and maintenance of a new route through the park, Viridor had considered upgrading the permissive path to the main cycle path, with the cycle path through the site replaced with a mown footpath (see [briefing note](#)). This would connect to the permissive path at the gate to the southern edge of the southern lake and would require a path and screening. DC commented that he favours the permissive path route, as this would reduce disturbance across the site and create a better north south commuting route.

RD commented that there were possible issues with connectivity to the north of 100 Acre, where the cycle path would stop and not continue into Merton. However, with the proposed cycle path route across the landfill, this would still have the same issue. The proposed change should be raised at the next CAMC meeting.

AF then led discussion on connecting the site to Beddington Lane. A path is proposed to the south of the SAM site. This, ostensibly, connects with the paddocks on the meadowland but would need to pass between SAM site and Phase 3 wet grassland, possibly creating disturbance.

AF's proposal was that a path be created to the south of the southern channel (linking to the permissive path and the culvert across the southern channel). This should help reduce disturbance between the wetland areas but also provide a heightened view to look down onto the sites, providing a better vantage point for observations.

The CSG supported the creation of a southern perimeter path, subject to detailed design.

- d) BFBG access: RD reported that since the introduction of having to sign in and out at the entrance on Beddington Lane, visit numbers from the bird group had dramatically reduced, with 3 key holders having quit. BFBG keyholders now stand at 22. Reduced visits reduces the number of casual records for the site, particularly around scarcities / rarities.

The CSG discussed possible solutions, including smart phone 'locator apps' . It was determined that the best course of action would be for RD / BFBG to

discuss with Andrew Turner

Action → RD & AT to discuss possible access solutions

9. Date of next meeting: Friday 6th March 2020. The meeting will be at 10.00 am at Viridor Offices, Beddington Farmlands, unless the Warden office is available in the ERF and suitable large enough to accommodate.

Action → DW to send out calendar invites

Update: Invites sent 09/12/2019

With no further business, the meeting closed at 13:40

Site visit

No site visit was undertaken, as there were no new works to inspect.

Figure 1 - Islands

