

**Beddington Farmlands Conservation and Access Management Committee meeting minutes
Thursday 18th February 2021 13.00**

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 (deputy)
 Derek Coleman – CSG representative on the CAMC.
 Mathew Frith – London Wildlife Trust – Director of Conservation
 Rosemary Waugh – Thames Water – Corporate Responsibility Manager
 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
 Marcus Kohler – MKA Ecology
 Paul Rowland – Viridor - Head of Major Contracts and Landfill
 Jonathan Downs – Viridor – Engineering Graduate Manager
 Andrew Turner - Madano, supporting Viridor

Item		Action
1.0	Introductions & Apologies	
1.1	Viridor welcomed members of the Conservation and Access Management Committee (CAMC) to the virtual video call. Cllr Foster welcomed attendees to the call. There were apologies shared from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Richard Aylard – Thames Water – Sustainability Director ● David Mellor – ProLogis – Development Director 	
1.2	The minutes of the last meeting were reviewed, Andrew Turner noted that David Warburton kindly shared feedback and this was included in the document. Derek Coleman raised a query in the previous minutes relating to his support for cycling in the community, but not on the Farmlands nature reserve. It was agreed this point would be reflected more accurately. It was agreed that the minutes of the last meeting were representative and were signed off. Andrew took the action to upload the minutes to the Viridor website. The actions from the previous meeting would be discussed at the relevant agenda item of the meeting.	AT AT
1.3	Paul Rowland offered an update on the Strategic review at Viridor, and it was noted this would be concluded in the coming weeks.	PR

2.0	Update from Charlie Owens – Beddington Farmlands warden	
2.1	Charlie Owens delivered a short update from the Beddington Farmlands Warden, noting that due to COVID-19 restrictions, he was not able to attend the site since 1st January 2021. A weekly meeting had been established to coordinate between Viridor, the London Borough of Sutton and the Warden during this time.	
2.2	Charlie added that there was a big focus on water level management across the site, due to the wet weather, the site was acting as flood alleviation for the river Wandle and levels in the lakes and wet grassland Phase 1 were very high. It was intended that water gauging boards need to be installed ASAP when the water levels subside, to enable detailed monitoring to take place	
2.3	Phase 1 wet grassland required internal weir installation to manage water flow across each side of the habitat. A draft wet grassland management plan was submitted to the Conservation Science Group in January for review ahead of implementation. Charlie added that the first couple of years of management would be 'feet finding'. However, the lessons learned would be replicated across Phases 2 and 3.	
2.4	Charlie had been working with the Viridor team to re-purchase trees to fulfil the SDEN planting scheme requirements with c. 600 whips and standards of varying maturity being ordered and due to be planted, along with the first of three orchard creation phases. There was a discussion around the orchard, and it was noted this would not be a community orchard but solely for wildlife.	
2.5	There was a discussion around the lake islands and the limited management to these habitats that had been completed in 2020 due to weather conditions and resources. Charlie added that further gravel will need to be placed on top of some of the lake islands to further create a supportive habitat for lapwing at the end of the 2021 breeding season.	
2.6	Charlie noted that meetings had taken place around the installation of anti-predator fencing around the wet grassland phase 1 habitat.	
2.6	Work was underway with Marcus Kohler and Roger Wardle to develop meadow management plans to inform their future management and how grazing could play a role in this work. Charlie Owens will collaborate with Marcus to commence management plans and appropriate monitoring from 2022.	CO
2.7	Charlie has created a proposal that sets out a timeline and targets for establishing a volunteer team to deliver practical conservation at the Farmlands for 2021. This will be submitted to Viridor and will be shared with the Conservation Science Group and the Conservation Access Management Committee in the coming months.	AT
2.8	Charlie added that work had been completed to progress the pilot interpretation board ahead of the CAMC. Andrew Turner added that this was nearing completion and would be printed and installed in the month of March.	
	Rosemary Waugh updated members around the work with Aquatic Engineering, the consultancy supporting Thames Water, to map and develop a solution for wider water management on the site. It was noted that an error had been made in their initial work and some parts of the site had been omitted from the study. This was being rectified. It was confirmed that Aquatic Engineering were revisiting the site to measure a number of habitats to ensure accuracy in their report. David Warburton expressed concern at this delay, noting that Aquatic Engineering had visited site with members of the project team in September 2020.	

	<p>Marcus and Adrian added that the date of the meeting may need to change to ensure full availability of the relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>Rosemary explained that Thames Water were engaging with their Innovation team to review the findings of a trial at their Wisley pumping station spreading post treatment effluent onto the land. Rosemary noted that Thames Water were exploring if this could be replicated and used on the historic sludge bed displacement habitats. There were concerns from Thames Water around the health and safety requirements including the final effluent nitrogen and phosphorus levels. Rosemary noted the potential interaction with the community. There was some confusion around this, reflecting the fact that the historic sludge drying beds had received this material for a number of years and would be fenced away from the community. Rosemary took an action to share a short briefing note for CAMC members.</p> <p>Rosemary noted that Viridor had shared indicative costs for the management of the historic sludge drying bed habitats and confirmed Thames Water were exploring further contractor quotations. Marcus asked for collaboration given the lessons learned by Viridor on the management of these habitats. Marcus and Rosemary agreed to meet to discuss best-practice management techniques for these habitats.</p> <p>Marcus continued to summarise the work underway on the displacement habitats in Hundred Acre and the South East Corner. This work had been highly successful to create a managed habitat for lapwing with the installation of pipework to pump water into the habitats and the combination of small beds into larger bodies of water to make more attractive habitats for lapwing. Marcus noted the intention to now look to seek targeted management to provide suitable habitat to encourage redshank. David and Charlie added that the London Borough of Sutton were still seeking commitment from Thames Water around the long-term management of these habitats.</p> <p>Simon Latham confirmed that Viridor were due to present at the March meeting of the Housing, Economy and Business Committee and the Council were preparing a paper for members. Simon added that this would need to now include reference to a report circulated by Marcus Kohler shortly before the CAMC. David noted that the Annual Ecology report by Marcus, usually delivered in March, was a vital document to record the habitat and ecology on the Farmlands, which would be supplemented in the future by volunteer and Warden based reporting.</p>	<p>RW</p> <p>MK/ RW/ DW</p>
3.0	The public access strategy working group and cycleway update	
3.1	<p>Andrew Turner updated members that Viridor had progressed the work on the proposed access amendments to the Restoration Management Plan since the last meeting. Viridor had met with representatives of the Mitcham Common Conservators, members of the community and access strategy working group, Thames Water and London Borough of Sutton in a pre-application meeting.</p> <p>Andrew summarised the current status of this work, including that Viridor and the community proposals were now broadly aligned to enhance the surface of the existing permissive footpath between Beddington Park and the northernmost bird hide. This would include enhancements to the bird hide access walkways and provide a fully accessible surface for users, as well as limited cycling opportunities. The proposal was to provide cycle parking and a chicane to mark the end of the limited cycleway. This requirement was sought by the Mitcham Common Conservators. Viridor would also enhance the link between the permissive footpath and Hackbridge station. However it was noted that to open this route would require engagement with Network Rail.</p>	
3.3		

	<p>Andrew shared a drawing of the Farmlands noting that Viridor will create a figure of eight walkway around the lakes, along with a pathway up to the proposed Wandle Vista Viewpoint. This drawing would be supplemented with images of the self-bound gravel and concrete surfaces of the pathways along with cross-sections of the permissive footpath route with the community.</p> <p>The habitat management scheme for the permissive footpath area will include the SDEN planting scheme and additional habitats to be created as a result of optimising the route to follow the desire lines. It is likely additional tree and scrub planting will be implemented. Andrew noted the intention to share these materials with the access strategy working group ahead of submitting them to the London Borough of Sutton. It was anticipated this may be submitted in March or April.</p> <p>3.4 Lysanne confirmed surprise that the drawing shown on the screen differed slightly from the latest version shared with the community. The main difference was a variation to the route linking the permissive footpath to the proposed Wandle Vista viewpoint. Adrian explained this was taking into account the gradients on the site and that there was a semi-direct link between the permissive footpath and Wandle Vista viewpoint. It was confirmed that the full information pack around the variations would be shared with the community ahead of submission.</p> <p>3.5 Andrew added that community desire for east/west access across the Farmlands continued to be reviewed by Viridor. This was not consented within the Restoration Management Plan and as such Viridor had discussed with the London Borough of Sutton, community and Thames Water that this would be an additional access and would need to be explored separately to the planning variation. Viridor have committed to 'safeguarding' an E/W route in the current planning submission. It was noted that the community were seeking a meeting with Thames Water to discuss these points.</p> <p>Cllr Andrew asked what 'safeguarding of this pathway meant in reality.' Andrew confirmed that Viridor were committing to collaborating with Thames Water to deliver an east/west access in the future. However, Viridor were not prepared to wait for this to be resolved before progressing with the core delivery of the Restoration Management Plan. There was a short discussion that noted the likely routes for east/west access. Cllr Andrew and Tom Sweeney acknowledged the work that had gone into this consideration and the wider progress since the last meeting.</p> <p>3.5 Andrew noted the recent Campaign for Rural England's (CPRE) manifesto to call on the Mayor of London to make the Beddington Farmlands a 'public park' among ten new parks for London. Viridor had met with CPRE and remained committed to restoration of Beddington Farmlands, in accordance with the Restoration Management Plan, by 2023.</p> <p>Mathew Frith noted that he was surprised by the CPRE comments, with the London Wildlife Trust holding meetings with the LA Mayoral candidates.</p> <p>3.6 David Warburton added that the Conservation Science Group had looked at potential additional bird hides overlooking the southern reed bed, and additional hide to overlook Phase 1 & 2 wet grasslands and another hide for Phase 3 wet grassland as part of the future access aspirations for the Farmlands, noting these were positive discussions.</p>	AT/AF
4.0	Wet grassland, lapwing habitat update	
4.1	Adrian Frost shared images of the displacement habitats in Hundred Acre, explaining that these habitats were now being managed correctly for breeding lapwing and it had been	

	<p>noted the habitats are in far better condition than over recent years, without concerted management effort. Viridor had employed a dedicated resource to focus on turning and managing the sludge beds; the aerial images presented by Arian showed a large number of the beds filled with water.</p> <p>4.2 Adrian added that a network of pumps and pipelines had been installed to support the pumping of water from the wet grassland into the Hundred Acre habitat. Marcus explained that work was going very well and identified beds that had been combined to make one larger sludge bed.</p> <p>4.3 Adrian shared a number of slides to support his summary update of the wet grassland habitat, confirming that following the completion of contouring and island creation of Phase 1 wet grassland, the focus was now on ensuring that the anti-predation fence was installed around the Phase 1 area before the spring. Viridor had been engaging with contractors and had also sought advice from the predation expert at the RSPB. Adrian noted that it had been difficult to find suitable contractor to provide quotes</p> <p>4.4 However, Adrian added that a contractor had now been selected and the Phase 1 predator fencing, an 'otter type' of fencing (non-electric) will be installed in March, which will include creosoted fenceposts for enhanced lifespan. Images were shown of the fencing type, noting this would be c. 1.6m high with a canted top to prevent foxes from climbing and also had provision to deter them from burrowing under the fence line. There was a short discussion around humane predator control. Adrian confirmed that a professional pest management contractor had visited the site in recent weeks, identifying a small number (c.15) of foxes feeding on the food waste at the Transfer Station located adjoining the Phase 1 wet grassland.</p> <p>4.5 Viridor was in discussions with its ERF contractors about demobilising from the construction compound (currently occupying most of Phase 2 wet grassland). No timeframe for their demobilising has been agreed but Adrian hoped this would be as soon as possible, to allow him to get onto this area. Adrian outlined the proposals to mobilise contractors to the site in spring / as soon as the site is dry enough, to ensure that breeding birds do not nest in Phase 3 and then progress can be made to create the scrapes and islets in the summer. Adrian added that Viridor's contractors would also focus on reviewing the lake island habitats and make any adjustments suitable to enhance this habitat for lapwing.</p> <p>Adrian also showed a number of images indicating how quickly the water levels, in some cases within 24 hours, rise across the site to overtop the weirs designed to control the water levels in the lakes. Adrian added that the Farmlands site was designed to act as flood attenuation for the river Wandle and that at times of high-water events the hydraulic continuity of the site would see all water bodies, including wet grassland areas becoming flooded.</p>	
5.0	Acidic grassland update	
5.1	<p>Cllr Foster noted frustration at the lack of progress made on the acidic grassland habitat workstream across a number of months. Cllr Foster summarised that he understood there was a dispute between Viridor and London Borough of Sutton around what would be a suitable level of acidic grassland to be provided to meet the specifications of the planning documentation. Cllr Foster noted he would like Viridor and the London Borough of Sutton to take the issue outside of the CAMC and return to the next CAMC with an agreed position.</p> <p>5.2 Cllr Andrew queried this approach. Following a discussion, it was confirmed that Viridor and the London Borough of Sutton would revert at the next CAMC meeting with an agreed</p>	AF/ AW

<p>5.3</p> <p>5.4</p> <p>5.5</p> <p>5.6</p> <p>5.7</p>	<p>position and next steps. Simon Latham commented that to reflect the importance of the habitat to the Farmlands, might it be sensible to convene an extraordinary meeting of the CAMC to confirm the position. Andrew agreed to take this away for consideration.</p> <p>Adrian updated members that Viridor had been working with its specialists to understand how best to progress the acidic grassland habitat. Further to recent conversations, Viridor had sought expert advice and review of the Restoration Management Plan and acidic grassland requirements. A further consultant, Earthcare Technical, has been appointed to review the deliverability of the acidic grassland by reviewing the GeoChem reports.</p> <p>There was a discussion around the issues of delaying the decision around whether to progress with the habitat or not. Andrew noted that Viridor had committed to planting the nursery sward habitat on the area to help bind the seed bed and also green over the portion of the site.</p> <p>It was noted that the London Borough of Sutton had suggested, should Viridor be unable to deliver a suitable acidic grassland, there would be a worst-case scenario compensation payment due to be made of c. £13.5m. There was then discussion around the fact that the calculations were made using a framework that did not exist at the time of the planning approval for the Restoration Management Plan but would need to be imposed for any new major planning application, such as movement away from the acid grassland</p> <p>David responded to Andrew’s question about Viridor’s need to come up with a suitable alternative habitat from previous CAMC meetings and that this had been discussed at the December 2020 CSG. Whilst it was agreed at that meeting it was almost certainly the best and most sustainable way forwards, this is where the requirement for compensation would come in and this was not covered at the CSG. David stated that in-situ compensation by way of enhancing / enlarging the wetland habitats may go some way to reducing an overall compensation payment, but the site was finite in area, so new habitats would be difficult to create within the boundary. David noted a payment would leave the London Borough of Sutton in a tricky position, due to the subsequent need to find a suitably large expanse of land to undertake ‘Biodiversity Offsetting’ for the unit value of the acidic grassland.</p> <p>Simon Latham noted that the London Borough of Sutton was ready and willing to help Viridor to engage with the Environment Agency around the acidification of the soil and potential issues arising from the potential run-off. Paul Rowland thanked Simon, but noted that there was a UK wide issue of Environment Agency resource to engage with Viridor.</p>	
<p>6.0</p>	<p>Any other business</p>	
<p>6.1</p> <p>6.2</p>	<p>Andrew reiterated that Viridor had worked with Charlie, Derek Coleman, Norman & Lysanne to take the draft interpretation board forward since the last meeting. The text was now approved but the board still needed to be printed. Andrew took the action to progress this interpretation board through to installation in the next month.</p> <p>Andrew also noted that Viridor had met with Christina Peake following the last CAMC meeting to share the details of the Community Benefit Fund. Viridor understood that Christina was now progressing an application to the fund. Viridor also received an application from a local bird watcher to the Community Benefit Fund, which sought funding for a project to install webcams in the barn owl box located on the Farmlands. Funding outcome to be determined. Since 2016, Viridor had distributed over £185,000 to projects in the community, with over £90,000 since March 2020, this included £30,000 to the Beddington infant’s school.</p>	<p>AT</p>

<p>6.3</p> <p>6.4</p> <p>6.5</p>	<p>David sought clarification to understand if Viridor would be funding the additional required interpretation materials for the Farmlands. Andrew noted that interpretation would be funded by Viridor, however the artistic installation was a community driven project.</p> <p>David questioned whether Viridor and Thames Water had a definitive answer on whether they would require an abstraction licence from the Environment Agency to provide appropriate water to the wet grassland habitats at the necessary times. This is based on the calculations for abstraction Adrain had drafted out and sent to Aquatic Engineering. There was a discussion around the process for acquiring a licence. It was agreed Viridor would revert back to the CAMC with an update.</p> <p>Tom Sweeney queried the appropriate next steps for engaging around the acidic grassland project and whether the Wandle Trust could be involved. David noted that the London Borough of Sutton sits on the Wandle Catchment Partnership group along with the Environment Agency and Wandle Trust to deliver the Catchment Plan. David noted that it would be more appropriate to engage with these stakeholders once a 'go' or 'no-go' decision had been taken on the habitat with the Environment Agency.</p> <p>Lysanne asked if Viridor had given consideration to bench placement along the footpaths on the Farmlands. Andrew confirmed that Viridor had purchased benches for placement within the bird hides along the permissive footpath. It was noted that wider bench placement would be a suitable topic of discussion at a future CAMC meeting.</p>	
<p>7.0</p>	<p>Date of next meeting</p>	
<p>7.1</p> <p>7.2</p> <p>7.3</p>	<p>Following a discussion, it was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be held on Thursday 20th May at 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>Andrew also added that it would be helpful for members to agree the next series of meetings and future CAMC meetings were agreed for the 20th August and 18th November.</p> <p>Cllr Foster noted that there would be an Annual General Meeting of the CAMC in April, and it was likely this would be a shorter meeting held ahead of the next full CAMC.</p> <p>Simon Latham confirmed that reflecting the importance of the Farmlands project and the scrutiny placed upon the acidic grassland project it may be sensible to reconvene for an exceptional meeting of the CAMC ahead of the next full meeting. Viridor agreed to take this as an action.</p>	<p>AT</p>