

Beddington Farmlands CAMC meeting – 10th May 2024 09.15-11.00 – London borough of Sutton Civic Offices

Attendees:

<p>CAMC members: Cllr Tim Foster (Chair) Cllr Dave Tchil (Vice Chair)</p> <p>Norman Jones (Hackbridge) Lysanne Horrox (Hackbridge) Karen Williams (Beddington)</p> <p>Derek Coleman (BFBG) Tony Burton (Wandle Valley Forum)</p>	<p>London Borough of Sutton officers: Andy Webber Simon Chalcraft David Warburton Charlie Owens</p>	<p>Valencia: Grant Scott</p> <p>Secretariat: Andrew Turner</p>
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Item		Action
1.0	Introductions & Apologies	
1.1	<p>Cllr Foster welcomed members to the meeting, noting that Cllr Lewis would be substituted on the CAMC following his changing role within the administration of the London Borough of Sutton. Andrew Turner took an action to contact Committee Services.</p> <p>There were a number of apologies share ahead of the meeting:</p>	AT
1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cllr Barry Lewis (London Borough of Sutton) - Marcus Kohler (MKA Ecology) - Mathew Frith (London Wildlife Trust) - Spencer Palmer (London Borough of Sutton) - Ian Ruffell (Thames Water) - Andy Stokes (Valencia) 	
1.3	<p>Minutes of the last meeting were available at the meeting.</p>	
2.0	Farmlands restoration update	
2.1	<p>In the absence of Andy Stokes, Grant Scott delivered a brief restoration update, with the use of slides for members of the CAMC.</p>	
2.2	<p>The inert filling with construction soils of the area known as Phase 10 (towards the SE corner) by contractor Killoughery is ongoing. At present approximately 35% of the void has been infilled NB based on the rate of in fill over the last 18mnths to achieve the restoration profile (circa 500km3) it would take approximately 30mnths (Sept 2026) depending on the construction market.</p>	
2.3	<p>Since the last CAMC meeting in October 2023 progress on the restoration has been impacted by the wettest winter / early spring on record but the following activities has been undertaken.</p>	

<p>2.4</p>	<p>In late Autumn 2023, 80% of the Acid grassland was cut but was not complete due to wet weather leading to poor ground conditions, the meadowland was also cut, collected, and baled.</p> <p>Across the wet grassland habitats six Fox surveys are currently being undertaken to determine how the foxes are entering Phase 1 & 3 Wet grassland, so the correct mitigation can be applied. It was proposed to trim Phase 1 islands in early Spring 2024 but by the time the water levels had dropped sufficient to allow safe access nesting birds were observed on the islands and the works could not be undertaken.</p> <p>The following works were undertaken within and to the peripheral of Phase 1 wet grasslands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strimmed the east half the anti-predator other lengths not undertaken to minimise risk of disturbing the nesting birds. ○ Flailed SAC area and around pylon ○ Flailed the northern flank (ruderal area) between acid grassland and MEC overflow Channel <p>Cattle (3 cows) were introduced in Phase 3 from the 23rd February 2024 to graze the vegetation. The cattle were provided by Downland Partnership and was proposed to be on site until the 30th April 2024 but the cattle was moved to another site, on the 12th April 2024 due them having eaten all the available fodder.</p> <p>In Winter/Spring 2024, 90% of the islands were manually strimmed but whilst undertaking this activity the Contractor (Fgs agri) observed a nest on one of the islands with any further strimming works put on hold. The Warden was made aware of the nest. The Phase 3 weir has been reset.</p> <p>Four bird hides have been installed on stone bases at various locations around site. From discussions with Neil their location was determined and set out by the Warden.</p>	
<p>2.5</p>	<p>Approximately 1,440m of footpath has been constructed on site from the north gate running along the eastern side of the northern and southern lakes and the southern reedbeds to the south gate with a spur to the Mile Road Gate.</p> <p>It should be noted that the footpath requires remediation in place which has not been possible due to wet ground conditions.</p>	
<p>2.6</p>	<p>Approximately 2,900m of stock proof fence has been installed on site and 13 No agricultural gates. There are some minor repairs to be undertaken to the stock proof fence. Approximately 2,340m of hedgerow was planted in the Winter, circa 11,700 stems.</p>	
<p>2.7</p>	<p>On the permissive footpath, patch repairs and replacing the gravel with stone to the three bird hides leading off the permissive footpath have been undertaken. Cutting back any overhanging bushes protruding on to the path.</p>	
<p>2.8</p>	<p>There was a discussion following this presentation and Grant was given the action to prepare a progress plan for sharing with the CAMC at the next meeting.</p>	<p>GS</p>

2.9	It was noted that vehicles, thought to be delivering soils into the landfill site were travelling too fast around the roundabout at the entrance to the site. Grant took an action to investigate.	GS
2.10	Clive Barber had now retired, with Paul Thompson replacing him. There was a wider discussion around the lack of progress, and suitable resourcing onsite. Derek and David explained that Neil Gannon, the site supervisor, was often confined to the weighbridge. Grant was tasked with exploring whether a weighbridge operator could be hired to enable Neil Gannon to dedicate more time to restoration activities.	GS
2.11	Tony Burton responded that an additional weighbridge operator didn't address the scale of resource shortfall. It was required for Valencia to outline what resource is needed to deliver Farmlands restoration programme by when and where will it come from. Simon Chalcraft explained that progress was being challenged by a delay in getting contractors onto site in a timely manner to undertake small jobs, but also acknowledging that the current contractors were not trained ecologists.	
2.12	Cllr Foster built on this frustration noting he felt that the London Borough of Sutton (LBS) were not in control of this situation, with no clear plan for enforcement. Tony Burton added that the Wandle Valley Forum's consultation response clearly outlined a need for a reboot in the mechanism to guarantee delivery, this could be the CAMC or another vehicle.	
3.0	Planning application update	
3.1	<p>Andy Webber started the update noting that the London Borough of Sutton's planning department position on Valencia Waste Management's planning submission, following the Council receiving the planning application DM2024/00199 on 12 February.</p> <p>Andy explained further detail was in David Warburton's pre-meeting briefing, but the Planning Department were close to receiving all the responses to the application and these would be shared with Valencia Waste Management to address the comments. Any noted it would be fair to say as it stands the Council was not in position to support application, with a number of concerns including the baseline methodology and approach to surveying of habitats.</p>	
3.2	The London Borough of Sutton would like to give Valencia the opportunity to address the issues with the submission, but this would need to be in a way that would be very timebound. Tony Burton reinforced the need for there to be a clear timebound nature to the requests to Valencia. Andy confirmed that at this point LBS were minded to give Valencia a number of months to develop the application further.	
3.3	<p>Andy reiterated that the London Borough of Sutton are very clear that there is still a twin track programme underway with elements of the scheme that would not be varied still needing to demonstrate tangible progress and development. This was one of the key concerns held by LBS given the years of inertia by Valencia, and the previous leaseholder.</p> <p>Andy confirmed that he did not think, at this moment there in time, there was value in dealing with the application and making a decision. LBS also noted that there were</p>	

	<p>elements of the permission that the Council would like to make much tighter for example timebound deadlines to complete different habitats.</p>	
3.4	<p>It was noted that David Warburton, on behalf of the Sutton Biodiversity Team had prepared c. 50 pages to summarise the key issues with the submission, explaining one of the core issues was around the baseline habitats in the context of the recently implemented Environment Act.</p>	
3.5	<p>There was a conversation around the land under Thames Water’s control, known as the Hundred Acre and SE Corner. David explained that despite concern over these habitats and their value for lawing Thames Water was under no legal obligation to do anything to these habitats, whereas Valencia held a legal obligation to manage the wet grassland.</p> <p>It was acknowledged that Valencia, potentially Prologis and Thames Water may need to apply to the Environment Agency for a licence to abstract water from the Main Effluent Channel. It was discussed that Thames Water had made approaches to a number of stakeholders explaining that there may be funding from external bodies to deliver restoration work on the Farmlands. Cllr Foster noted that incoming colleagues from Thames Water were not at director level.</p>	
3.6	<p>David explained that Prologis had communicated with LBS that the lining of the habitats in Pongo Park had failed and were considering wider options.</p>	
3.7	<p>Cllr Tchil sought to understand at what point the Beddington Farmlands would cease to hold ecological value, and could be considered a park, much like that of Beddington. David challenged that Beddington had limited biodiversity value.</p>	
3.8	<p>David responded that this was a complex question given the objectives of the Conservation Management Scheme set out habitats that were designed to meet the objectives. At present each objective was failing. Derek Coleman echoed this that there Farmlands still held exceptional ecological value attracting a diverse assemblage of wildlife.</p> <p>Derek also was keen to ensure that the long determination timelines that had been seen with previous applications on the site were not repeated. Tony Burton noted that he would be keen to understand how the new proposals matched the existing consented scheme. Andy Webber explained that the proposals would need to be assessed as having the best possible change to deliver the Conservation Management Scheme objectives.</p>	
3.9	<p>Grant confirmed that Valencia would review LBS comments carefully and work to respond to the submission comments within the prescribed timescales.</p> <p>Tony also sought to understand the long term management for the site, whether Valencia sought to hand over the site. Grant confirmed that Valencia were not habitat management experts and would seek to establish a suitable partner, at the time when the site was sustainable. Tony encouraged Valencia to actively engage with suitable partners rather than take a passive position to ensure the best results for the site.</p>	
3.9	<p>Cllr Tchil asked whether Valencia took on Farmlands, in full knowledge that it couldn’t be delivered, then waited to put another application. Grant confirmed that Valencia purchased the entire Viridor landfill portfolio which has a number of complex sites within it.</p>	

<p>3.10</p> <p>3.11</p>	<p>Lysanne noted that many residents sought to learn more about restoration progress on the Farmlands, and requested a community update that could be shared with local residents in the coming weeks. Andrew took an action to draft this.</p> <p>There was a discussion around the future of the project website, used initially for the consultation around the planning application. The CAMC were in agreement that this website would be helpful for Charlie Owens to communicate positive messages around the site. However, Grant explained that perhaps being clear between the Farmlands narrative and planning application communications would be important.</p> <p>It was also noted that a face to face meeting would be preferred for any future planning application activity. Grant confirmed he would confirm at the next meeting if the website could be repurposed.</p>	<p>AT</p> <p>GS</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Any other business</p>	
<p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p> <p>4.4</p> <p>4.5</p> <p>4.6</p>	<p>Cllr Foster sought to understand if Valencia would present proposals for a brand for the Farmlands. Andrew confirmed that this would be prepared ahead of the next meeting.</p> <p>Lysanne updated members that an application made on behalf of the Hackbridge community to Transport for London with the objective of securing funding to connect the Farmlands permissive footpath to platform two at Hackbridge Station was unsuccessful. There was a discussion around the reasons behind the decision.</p> <p>Lysanne thanked Valencia for committing to connect the permissive footpath up to the railway station boundary, but noted that TfL felt there was uncertainty over the viability of the wider restoration scheme. Tony noted that this was concerning, Lysanne sought to understand if Valencia would commit to the additional works to fully integrate the station and permissive footpath. Grant committed to take this away and revert at a future meeting.</p> <p>Derek sought to discuss Thames Water’s longer term role at the Farmlands, and explained that Ian Crump (Thames Water) had confirmed there would be additional funding to manage the habitats in the Hundred Acre and SAM sites following Valencia’s surrender of these parcels of land.</p> <p>Cllr Foster explained that he had received correspondence from Thames Water seeking to raise funds from wider organisations to support their work on the Farmlands. Cllr Foster noted that in the context of Thames Water’s business activity this was not a positive sign.</p> <p>David Warburton did note that this was promising, however there was a key issue blocking the management of these habitats. Following the handback of these sludge beds to Thames Water there was no ‘controller of premises’ with the ability to sign-off or oversee work on this non-operational part of the Beddington site. Given the critical importance of these areas for Lapwing it was of the utmost importance that this was resolved.</p> <p>Following a discussion it was agreed that Cllr Foster, in his role as Chair of the CAMC would write a letter on behalf of the CAMC to Thames Water. Andrew took the action to prepare an initial draft for comment.</p>	<p>AT</p> <p>GS</p> <p>AT</p>

4.7	Following a wider discussion including noting that Thames Water had applied to the Environment Agency to process upto 100 tonnes of anerobic digestate per day on the site, in addition to Suez's proposals along the road. It was also agreed that Thames Water would be invited to the next CAMC to deliver a presentation relating to their operations at Beddington and the strategy for future management of the Hundred Acre and SE Corner.	AT/SC
5.0	Date of next meeting	
5.1	<p>It was agreed that the next meeting would be the Annual General Meeting held on 20th June 09.15-11.00 at the London Borough of Sutton Civic Centre. This would either be simply an AGM or a wider update depending on the level of activity completed in the weeks ahead of the meeting.</p> <p>Andrew took an action to circulate the minutes of the last AGM along with an agenda for the meeting on 20th May.</p>	AT