



## **PETITION**

### **DELIVER THE PROMISED NATURE RESERVE AT BEDDINGTON FARMLANDS BY ENFORCING PLANNING CONDITIONS**

**Sutton Council Committee, 8 October 2019**

Good evening. I am Lysanne Horrox, a Sutton resident and member of the Executive Committee of Wandle Valley Forum. We are pleased to be presenting this petition to you this evening. It asks Sutton Council to ensure delivery of the promised nature reserve on Beddington Farmlands. The nature reserve is integral to the restoration plans associated with the development of Viridor's Energy Recovery Facility. I am supported here tonight by Peter Alfrey from the Beddington Farmlands Bird Group who can address any questions.

Wandle Valley Forum provides support and an independent voice for over 130 community groups, voluntary organisations and local businesses and for everyone who shares a passion for the Wandle. We have been involved in debates over Beddington Farmlands for many years. The area is at the heart of one of the biggest environmental opportunities in the London – an expanse of green space three times the size of Hyde Park stretching from Beddington to Mitcham.

It is truly remarkable that over 6,500 people have signed the petition. This confirms the intense public interest in the future

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of the Farmland and deep frustration over the delays in delivering the nature reserve and providing public access.

The wildlife importance of Beddington Farmlands is incontrovertible. It is a recognised Site of Metropolitan Importance for birdlife and a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. The authoritative Beddington Farmlands Bird and Wildlife Reports for successive years show this wildlife value is in overall decline. The area's iconic tree sparrow is all but extinct as is the little ringed plover and redshank. Lapwings, sedge warblers and whitethroat are also in serious decline.

The controversy over development of the Beddington incinerator is well known. This is not the subject of tonight's discussion. Our concern is that planning consent for the incinerator was conditional on the nature reserve being provided at the same time as the incinerator was built. Instead local people have watched the incinerator being constructed and becoming operational while progress on the nature reserve has been made at a snail's pace.

The Local Government Ombudsman was asked to investigate the delays in 2015 and concluded that "*to avoid the risk of future justified complaints, the Council should now seek to discharge the relevant conditions without delay. It should also seek to avoid any slippage in monitoring progress and in deciding what to do about any alleged or actual breaches in future*". Yet, since 2015 delivery of the nature reserve has fallen even further behind.

We welcome arrival of the new wildlife hides over the summer. It is also helpful that Viridor has published a Beddington Farmlands Restoration Roadmap to 2023. But this is too little too late. Once this Committee is over we cannot allow Viridor to slip further behind the timetable for delivery.

We also welcome Councillor McCoy's acknowledgment that Sutton Council "*understands and shares the frustration and*

*concerns of the community about the delays to the restoration and appreciates the reasons why there are calls for the council to take action to ensure that the project is delivered on time.”*

We cannot take Viridor’s roadmap commitments on trust. Nor can we wait till 2023 to find Viridor has missed its deadline. The planning conditions require development of the incinerator and delivery of the nature reserve to be synchronised. The failure to do this provides the basis for enforcement action. We know ecological process take time and we will know well in advance whether the nature reserve can be delivered on time.

To satisfy the petition we are therefore asking Sutton Council to take more immediate action. We need a critical timeline with key stages towards the completion date to be agreed and then enforced. It is not sufficient to delay enforcement action till after the planned completion date for the restoration in 2023. This will result in further, unacceptable wildlife loss.

The existence of Beddington Farmlands in the borough should be a source of immense pride to Sutton. It is a truly special place. The Farmlands can be central to London’s strategy for ecological recovery and transform millions of lives by providing contact with nature on their doorstep.

Tonight we are asking for your support and your action to make this a reality. Experience has shown that the nature reserve will not be delivered on time without Sutton Council’s intervention. This is your opportunity to deliver on the promise made at the time the Beddington incinerator was permitted. We ask you to take it.