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*A review for Wandle Forum members on recent topics and useful information arising since the last Forum meeting including issues raised at the WVRP Management Board and other meetings. Members are invited to contribute to these information updates. All unattributed items are written by the editor either as factual reporting or 'opinion'. The latter should be regarded as his views alone. **Wandle Forum Chair***

## **HLF - Bid Success – the next steps**

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Congratulations once more to the team that bid for the Heritage Lottery Fund Award on winning its first stage of the £2m plus bid and thanks to my predecessor, Jennifer Ullman & the Wandle Trust for leading the project. The Award according to the HLF website is designed to “revitalise the Wandle Valley as a major community asset for people living in Wandsworth, Merton, Sutton and Croydon”.

At the recent Management Board meeting a draft 'WVRP Officers' Group' report was circulated detailing the recruitment of a Project Development Officer who would manage a list of agreed projects. The Officer is to be based half the time at Groundwork offices and half at Wandsworth BC. Recruitment would be overseen by a new “Living Wandle Landscape Partnership Scheme Steering Group” (even the acronym for this group is too long!). The report recommends the Forum, LAs and other Forum member institutions be represented’.

The Group would be responsible for, amongst other things, approving projects and expenditure, reporting to the Management and Development Boards and ensuring the Stage 2 application be submitted as required, in January 2013. The Group will meet monthly for three months then every other month.

The money will be released in tranches, the first is £78,000 which “will be used to draw up plans to protect the valley’s open spaces and diverse natural environment and encourage greater involvement in the life of the river by its neighbouring communities through volunteering and education. It will also aim to

maximise the areas potential for sustainable transport, healthy living, tourism and leisure”.

Stage 2 will cover the balance of the bid. Although dependent on the acceptance of the submission this amounts to £1.9 million to develop the project in the years ahead. The scheme is the first ‘Landscape Partnership’ (LP) bid under the HLF auspices and winning the Stage 1 “is an indication of positive support. The applicant then progresses to the second round and submits a further, fully-developed application to secure the full award. This early level of strong financial commitment means that LPs can build strong partnerships with the assurance that funding for their scheme is in place provided that their final proposals meet the programme criteria”.

The schemes complexity demonstrates why specialist consultants are required to assist with the bids which usually include hard projects, actual landscape preservation hopefully including enhancement, and soft projects relating to communication based exercises such as community awareness, involvement and education.

### **OPINION**

*In spite of the addition of yet more committees, paperwork and alarming nomenclature we should be heartened because we now have a serious likelihood of a substantial budget with the Wandle Forum ‘recommended’ to have a clear voice in how it is spent and managed. As to whether projects listed in the Green Grid Framework are included will be a matter for the Steering Group to decide.*

## **The field north of BedZed**

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The latest map of the WVRP boundary shows that the field to the north of Bill Dunster’s famous BedZed eco-estate will now after all be part of the WVRP. So those fearing that it was to be included in the Hackbridge Intensification Zone can relax. That field happens to provide me with a painful memory.

It was not long after being commissioned by South London Partnership to write the Green Ribbon Initiative, the document aimed at encouraging the four Wandle councils to take up the opportunity

presented by the Wandle Valley, and from which the Wandle Forum eventually evolved, that I first drove past it and wondered why such a large open space had been fenced off. So, strictly as part of my research for the report, I found a hole in the wire fence and stepped gingerly through. Within a half dozen steps I had tripped, almost falling headlong into a concrete gully. So I did learn my lesson but it was wondering about the sheer size of this urban field being closed off for decades that stoked my own fascination for the Wandle Valley and its secrets.

*As a member of both the Wandsworth Society and the Wandsworth Town Centre Partnership (WTCP) I wrote briefly in the last UpDate that I have long been concerned that the area around the Wandle Delta, should form an appropriately green and attractive gateway to the proposed Regional Park at the point where it meets the Thames. Since then events have moved on. Once again the latest edition of the WVRP boundary map throws up a significant revision albeit rather less encouraging than that in the BedZed item. Once you place a magnifying glass on the map, you can see that Feathers Wharf is not now to be part of the park. In addition Wandsworth's recently submitted Local Development Framework (LDF), (the planning framework that replaces the UDP), recommends a mere three meters wide riverside walk plus an open space roughly tennis court size by the river mouth. Between there and the southern perimeter a block of nine and possibly more floors is recommended.*

*The Feathers Wharf's Wandle-side walk will eventually become part of the Thames Path, although it is currently routed behind the adjacent Waste Transfer Station. It should surely therefore be no narrower than the rest of the Thames Path with a further margin of planting in front of the building line. Wandsworth Society has pleaded that the open space at the river mouth should be substantially larger than proposed. (The whole site was actually promised when the WTS was built) . However representations to WBC have fallen on deaf ears as LDF site specific guidance is, as I write, being scrutinized by the planning inspector pending his final conclusions following years of campaigning, consultation and debate by the Society and others.*

*Having a site that is perceived as the gateway to a Regional Park could attract leisure seeking visitors and inward investment. Both gravitate towards attractive town centres and it was always a WTCP ambition to let the town centre grow towards the Thames which will be helped of course by the forthcoming development of the Ram Brewery. Endowing the critical Feathers Wharf site with no more than a 3 metre riverside walk (6m along the Thames stretch) and a very small river-mouth open space is not going to make it the economic and community leisure asset it should or could be.*

*WTCP's success in funding the excellent opening up of the Spit peninsula followed by the tiered west bank's ecozone would with an appropriately developed Feathers Wharf on the east bank, provide the critical mass to create a very special open space at the river mouth end of the site. Of course being next to the Waste Transfer Station makes development a challenge whether it's another block of flats, an open space or a combination of the two. But with a nine floor block already approved at the river mouth on the west bank and now another for the east bank what's being created will look like a funnel shaped loud hailer – perhaps proclaiming local planning's income generating priorities rather than creating a unique sense of place that would make it something of which the council could be proud and the community grateful. Not to mention the economic potential which by the way is one of the rationales along with leisure amenity and health for the whole WVRP initiative.*

## **Merton Abbey Chapter House**

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The Merton Priory Trust has been busy this year enhancing the Chapter House foundations and improving the presentation of the numerous exhibits. An important step was starting to remove tons of surrounding sand, the salt in which was corroding the ancient mortar, and this has had the happy result of appearing to raise the height of the foundations adding a little drama to the scene. The walls of the enclosure have been painted white which reflects light and brightens the whole site whilst the displays appear ever more accessible and well presented. These have been essentially interim measures, carried out by volunteers with virtually no funding, whilst awaiting the transfer of the title from the estate owners to Merton Council, together with substantial "Section 106" funds. After many years' negotiation this has, as we write, just been finalised, and the Trust now anticipates further major improvements next year.

The Chapter House has been opened to the public on four occasions this year, for the Wandle Weekend, the Festival of British Archaeology, London Open

House, and a recent exhibition as part of the inaugural Merton Arts Trail. The local churches have been active there too with several events, including a very successful Wandle Pilgrimage in the summer and a Carol Service planned in December. It's hoped next year to use the space for drama once again, as in previous years, and to make it a focus for wider community activity.

Meanwhile handwritten replicas of the original Magna Carta and Statutes of Merton have been commissioned by Merton Cllr. Richard Chellew. These unique and valuable, but fragile, copies will be held at Merton Town Hall, but handsome copies are available for sale in aid of the Trust. The latter document clearly demonstrates the importance of the Chapter House site to, not only Merton's, but the nation's heritage, and is a prime cultural assets for the WVRP. Congratulations to Cllr. Chellew for his efforts in acquiring these documents for the community, and to the Merton Priory Trust for the enhancements so far.

**John Hawks**

## **Wandle – the most improved river**

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Following its 2009 London Rivers Action Plan, the Environment Agency has announced that the Wandle is one of the 10 most improved rivers in England and Wales. Proof of the Plans success over and above the Award from the Royal Town Planning Institute. The Wandle from being declared a sewer in 1960 to what an EA spokesman described as “well known as one of the best coarse fisheries in the country.” He also stated the river was now habitat for chub, barbell, and eel. This improvement is the result of many initiatives including: fish stocking programmes, more stringent environmental regulation and cooperation with water companies and general

industry. All rivers must be cleaned up to meet the 2015 European river water quality standards.

### **OPINION**

*I would like to think that the Wandle’s four riparian councils together with the support of all the members of the Wandle Forum contributed over several years to this excellent result and recognition. The existence of the the voice of the Forum and its members has certainly kept the profile of the Wandle on the agendas of the GLA, the LAs and environmental / heritage institutions resulting in what should be an era of enhancement for one of London’s most important open spaces.*

## **Sutton Waste Management Plans**

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Although a fact of life it is a weak excuse that emails go astray and I missed one sent months ago as consultation on Sutton’s waste management plans. I panicked as I realised Sutton’s measures necessary to fulfil their future legal waste management obligations as directed by the South London Waste Plan, might have an impact on the WVRP, fringed as it is with waste management sites of various kinds. However I’m assured by the council officers at Sutton that their stated need for approx 2 hectares of additional land would not be claimed from land within the park boundary. It is also reassuring to know that

the Beddington Farmlands Bird Group has been on the case from the outset, and succeeded in further safeguarding habitat and WVRP interests. All I can add is to thank the officers for their time and to ask Forum members to read the plan for the areas they are familiar with and keep a watchful eye on any sites as they are upgraded or expanded to ensure the safeguards the BFBG have achieved do not have a detrimental impact on the WVRP. For those who know the area the response to the consultation is detailed site by site at [www.sutton.gov.uk/wasteplan](http://www.sutton.gov.uk/wasteplan)

## **Transport & Access Working Group**

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Extrapolated from an email from Tom Sharland. The Transport and Access Working group is having problems recruiting members and, sadly Tom Sharland of Sustrans has had to step down as chair because of a full programme of work commitments. This Group which met only once, is to be re-established and volunteer members are urgently required. At their meeting the following was agreed:-

1. More information is required from the WVRP Development Board on what is expected from the Group and to agree its objectives.
2. The identification of priorities along the length of the route that would feed into the development of an agreed action plan.

3. To establish land ownership along the length of the route.

In addition the following should be considered:-

1. The addition of Planning to the title and role of the sub group.
2. The establishing of the names of Borough Officers with responsibility for the WVRP who are willing and able to attend Meetings and undertake work on behalf of their Borough and the Sub Group.

If you are interested and have a point of view on these topics the working group is a useful platform for your input. **Please contact Katrina at Groundwork.**

## **Planning issues**

*The question of whether planning should be included in the remit of the Transport and Access Group was raised by Tom Sharland of Sustrans. The same question came to my mind recently on reading the specification of the Lee Valley Regional Park governance. Planning is clearly a fundamental issue especially now that boundaries have been set for the WVRP. I’m sure the implications for planning were taken into consideration when the perimeter was*

## **Comment**

*drawn up but clearly there are potential concerns about adjacent or potentially encroaching development as can be seen from this publication. See Wandle Delta article p2. The suggestion to the last Management Board for Special Planning Guidance to be published for the WVRP, as happens in the Lee Valley, were not accepted by the LA members of the Board.*

## **WRWA Award Funds (Western Riverside Waste Authority)**

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Grants are available in Wandsworth (as one of the participating boroughs in WRWA) for projects that work with local communities to promote environmental improvements and sustainable waste management. The Western Riverside Environmental Fund utilises landfill tax credits. It is available to support the following categories of projects as defined by ENTRUST, the regulator of the landfill tax credit scheme.

1. *The provision, maintenance or improvement of a **public park** or **public amenity** where it is for the protection of the environment e.g. pocket parks and seating areas, play areas, open spaces on housing estates, churchyards and community gardens.*
2. *Delivery of **biodiversity conservation** for UK species habitats.* Grants are usually offered in the range of **£5,000 - £25,000** with the flexibility to approve higher and lower amounts in exceptional circumstances.

There are 2 funding rounds per year with current closing date of 31st **August 2011**.

*An Expression of Interest form can be submitted at any time throughout the year, the second stage applications need to be submitted by the deadlines above).*

*The fund was set up in April 1999 to utilise landfill tax credits arising from household rubbish and other waste handled by the Western Riverside Waste Authority. The fund is managed by Groundwork UK. To date over £2 million has been made available to environmental projects within the boroughs of Lambeth, Wandsworth, Hammersmith & Fulham and Kensington & Chelsea.*

**For further information and an application pack please contact:** WREF Programmes Officer  
Groundwork London. Tel: 020 7239 1292. Email: londonprogrammes@groundwork.org.uk

(Ed. How about funding Feathers Wharf Park?)

## **The issue of Friends!**

## **Comment**

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*In spite of approval of the Governance report that recommends that a Friends Group is required that would initially be asked to contribute £2500 by next Spring, my initial cautious response (see last issue) to this request remains cautious but not closed.*

*A Friends Group is essentially a fundraising and support association which is quite distinct from being a consultative body and there are two issues that affect the success of establishing such a group.*

1. *Who exactly is being asked to be a fund raiser.*
2. *Why is a voluntary fund raising group needed i.e. what will the funds be used for.*

*Taking the first issue the Forum has a diverse membership made up of Stakeholders, LA and environmental institution representatives who are mainly employees. Whilst I'm not suggesting that any of these groups or individual members lacks the passion required to support the enhancement of the Wandle and create the WVRP the motivation to become in effect, a volunteer fundraiser will clearly be tempered by their position. The LA members are paid council officers who don't necessarily live locally and probably put in a fair amount of their own time already. They, quite understandably, are unlikely to be enthusiastic about offering more time or money.*

*This also largely applies to the institutional members whose credentials may be a good shade of green but nevertheless are in a similar position. That leaves the Stakeholder groups. These are already volunteers or virtual Friends, giving their own time and whose groups probably already contribute to related causes.*

*The Wandle Trust is of course effectively acting in a Friends role already in partnership with the EA and Natural England in generating the successful HLF bid. However the funds that result have to be for strictly defined projects and quite separate from the general requirements of the WVRP.*

*The second point remains that it is difficult to make an informed decision until the necessary informing takes place i.e. why and where funding will be required. This can only happen when the WVRP business plan has been completed and approved by the still to be recruited CEO.*

*My conclusion at this stage is that it is clear that simply changing or expanding the Forum to be a Friends group is not straightforward and needs thinking through. I believe that we can find a way to meet any essential funding shortfall through the exchange of ideas and imaginative thinking.*

*We know that all the LAs are actively lobbying for the abandonment of the inexcusable burden of the Lee Valley Precept which costs all four boroughs several hundred thousand pounds a year which would certainly cover a large part of the WVRP's eventual business plan funding requirement and possibly the scaling up of the next Wandle Festival so that it can in turn be a funding generator.*

*I hope that Forum members from whichever group will offer their ideas on this issue for discussion at the next Forum or for inclusion in the subsequent News Update.*

## London's most important wildlife habitat?

Peter Alfrey is a member of the Beddington Farm Bird Group, and a Forum member. He has written a book on the subject and provided us his notes on recent observations. For further information check links for the groups website. (Search *Beddington Farm Bird Group* and *Peter Alfreys Birding Notebook* blog.

### **PETERS NOTES:**

#### **Black Kite. The first record for Beddington.**

Birding highlight of the period was a **Black Kite** seen on 15<sup>th</sup> July. Other highlights included a long staying **Black-tailed Godwit**, **Garganeys** and **Wood Sandpipers**.

The **Tree Sparrows** had a good breeding season with over 500 young. This year as part of a RSPB led monitoring project all of these young were fitted with red rings and members of the public are encouraged to keep a look out for them.

#### **A Dewick's Plusia- the first record for the site.**

One of the main highlights of the summer was the profusion of wild flowers and plants that have grown on the new restoration areas. Over 350 botanical species were recorded.

Other wildlife highlights included **Common Lizard** and Dewick's Plusia- both new species for the site and several records of **Purple Hairstreak** and **Marbled White Butterflies**.

#### **Beddington Farmlands at the Carshalton Environmental Fair**

Conservation works have been progressing steadily. The southern lake has been planted with reeds, an area of species rich grassland is being generated and restoration works to the mounds is underway. We had a good day at the Carshalton Environmental Fair promoting all the great work and interesting wildlife at Beddington Farmlands.

*Peter Alfrey.*

#### **From the BFBG WEBSITE:**

'The BFBG consists of a group dedicated to the promotion, recording, preservation and conservation Of the Beddington Farmlands site. Most days there will be a member of the group at the Farmlands recording wildlife'.

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#### **The Question of Future Access**

*A priority topic for future debate once the WVRP governance and management are in place must be how public access will be dealt with. The balance between the conservation of habitat and tranquillity for wildlife and public access for observation, will need to be handled with the greatest sensitivity under the guidance of the BFBG, Council biodiversity officers and other specialists. The importance of this site to the WVRP cannot be stressed enough*

*I believe an escorted tour of Beddington Farmlands in the near future would be essential in expanding understanding and future decision making in this uniquely precious area. ED*

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## **Heritage and Culture working Group**

Extract of the minutes of H&CG meeting 13 July 2011

### **Areas at Risk**

Reports received from Merton and Sutton.

Discussion on how we identify so many areas and how do we prioritise them. The group will work to the English Heritage criteria and make a priority list of the most important ones. It is important to prioritise heritage values which need to be saved at any cost and be prepared to compromise on other sites. Sites may be a risk from development planning rather than just falling down. Discussion on what is a listed site and what is an area of risk.

It was agreed that each borough will identify their areas at risk for the next meeting. Croydon and Wandsworth will be contacted by the Chair to encourage them to produce their list as it is needed for the next meeting. We can then co-ordinate, put together and prioritise and put forward some form of recommendation to the Wandle Valley Park Management Board.

### **Awareness of Heritage Sites**

It was agreed that more public awareness is needed of heritage sites and why they are important.

**Working Group activity reports are welcome in the News UP Date**

## **Melanie's walks**

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Forum member Melanie Nunzet's walks are a great way to get to know the Wandle Valley's lesser known landscapes not to mention the best local pub grub. Here is her forthcoming programme of walks:

<b>Melanie's Autumn/Winter Walks 2011/12</b>	<b>Meeting place/time</b>	<b>Walk description</b>	<b>Distance</b>
<b>Date</b> Sunday 13 Nov	Mitcham Junction Station (bus stop on bridge) 10.05	Walk around Mitcham and the Common to attend the Remembrance Day Parade. Brunch/lunch at Ravensbury Arms to finish.	3-4 miles, easy, circular
Saturday 3 Dec	Mitcham Junction Station (bus stop on bridge) 2.15 pm	Walk around Mitcham Common. Refreshments at Ravensbury Arms to finish.	3-4 miles, easy, circular
Friday 30 Dec	St Mary's Church (see below for details) 10.00	Beddington Park Plus! To include coffee stop halfway in Carshalton.	3-4 miles, easy, circular
Saturday 14 Jan	Carshalton Station 2.05 pm	<b>Ramblers' Festival of Winter Walks</b> Walk to Heritage Aquatic Centre (by the Woodcote smallholdings) via Wilderness Island and Carshalton Park. Refreshments at end. Bus 127 back.	3-4 miles, easy, linear
Sunday 26 Feb	Mitcham Junction Station (bus stop on bridge) 10.05 am	Walk around Mitcham Common. Brunch/lunch at Ravensbury Arms to finish.	3-4 miles, easy, circular

## **NEXT FORUM MEETING**

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Apologies for the circulation of the wrong date for the next Forum meeting. We will advise the correct date asap. Look forward to seeing you then or hearing your views by email beforehand.

**Bruce St. Julian-Bown**  
Chairman Wandle Forum  
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