
The NEWS UPDATE is for WANDLE FORUM members and for email circulation to all interested bodies, LAs and institutions.

Written by the chair and reflecting his views except where stated – partly as preparatory information for the AGM this Wednesday Oct 24th 5.00 – 7.00pm, The William Morris pub, Merton Abbey Mills.

Renewal from within but still vigilant on the ground

Having at our last meeting established a new slimline Forum of community groups and charity members with a new sharper focus on meeting our aims, the forthcoming AGM marks the first working meeting following the Wandle Forum's re-launch. Yes, we need to consider a name change, membership registration and revised constitution, all essential in reflecting our leaner role in the context of the wider regional park and the establishment of a more formal organisation presenting an authoritative community voice and consultee body. But No, we won't take our eye off the ball of what is happening around us.

Authority and standing

The establishment of the WVRP Trust (Wandle Valley Regional Park) and the interface with bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), the local authorities and the GLA (Greater London Authority) means that the consultee body that responds to their proposals and requests must be solidly established and broadly representative if it is to continue being taken seriously. Yes it's a real bind that this will inevitably create some red tape and admin', although not to the extent necessary in becoming a charity, as the WVRP Trust is currently in process of doing - although that option might be on a future agenda.

Our dilemma, as we anticipated when our LA colleagues departed the Forum, is that the role I think we all aspire it to take on, needs more than the hours of input that our Vice Chair Angela and myself can put in. But asking for help in forming an Executive committee as we have done, means asking our members who are already heavily committed to their own voluntary group tasks or

charitable groups, to devote more time to the WF, and that is a tough call. Yet this is what we must do simply to keep abreast of the agenda that presents itself to us (see below). When as I hope our Executive Committee is confirmed and possibly expanded at the AGM, the first task will be to set its agenda and a date for its first meeting, something that we have so far failed to do probably for the very reason given above!

Community Groups lead on their issues .

A partial solution may be at hand and it simply requires a subtle adjustment to how we perceive what we do already. That is to ask members' own organisations to focus on the issues they raise, while we amplify their position as a major Forum issue. After all it is our members who, knowing their own locality, raise issues in the first place. The WF then takes them on, writing and campaigning in support. The Forum officers continue to lobby and campaign in support of the local group and those concerned with the river and park as a whole (inc the WVRP). But it is the local group that leads with the research and their own direct approach.

This is virtually what happens already, as with the Hackbridge railway bridges, where the Hackbridge & BC Neighbourhood Group & BedZed members lead on the local issue, whilst the Forum supports by expanding on, amplifying and repeating the concern, adding weight and therefore motivation for action by the relevant LA or other body. It is also the case with the Wimbledon Park Residents Association and their efforts to get access from Durnsford Rd Recreation Ground to the Wandle Trail.

Super Forum-A Forum but not as we now know it. We are already in a high level of dialogue with institutions partly through our own representation on the WVRP Trust which will facilitate the promotion of concerns and ideas that are mutually of interest. As part of the process of raising issues we recommend, with your approval, mounting a conference in May 2013 to follow up on the previous and highly successful conference at the Hub in 2009 which succeeded in raising the Wandle Valley's profile and potential. It is logical after all that it is our Forum that mounts what is in effect a 'super-forum' for all stakeholders on the realisation of that potential. With the support of Groundwork and the WVRP Trust CEO, Peter Wilkinson to make the event at least as useful as the last one it

will again raise the profile of the opportunity before us and sustain it. So it should not be too demanding on our time bearing in mind the points above. This is one area where our Executive Committee could play a key role while the job of monitoring planning submissions, responding to funding opportunities and identifying threats and opportunities in the development of the riverside and regional park are fully addressed.

I look forward to seeing you all at the William Morris Pub, Merton Abbey Mills, Colliers Wood. 5.00pm Wed Oct 24th assuming I survive the dentist beforehand.

Bruce St. Julian-Bown, Chair Wandle Forum

Out in the Valley

Updates on some of the issues on the Forum's Agenda.

Mitcham Common: We are concerned at the differing views about the proposed clearance on a section of Mitcham Common. This is a rare case when controversy has arisen between member groups. It is a subject that the Forum will follow with interest and attempt to understand fully before coming up with its own consensus view.

Water Quality Improvement project. The Forum was represented at a Wandle Trust briefing by Toby Hull on detailed plans to improve the river's water quality by narrowing the channel to increase the flow rate in areas where there are wide stretches of water. As part of the Wandle Trusts Catchment Plan this is very worthwhile, especially as there have been several, fortunately not overwhelming, pollution incidents on the Wandle in recent weeks. It is important that each case is recorded centrally in detail and the cause addressed so the polluter or pollutant will not cause the same problem again. The Wandle Trust work closely with the Environment Agency on this matter.

Durnsford Road Access and the Earlsfield link
The WPRA have been campaigning hard with WF support for access from the Durnsford Road

Recreation Ground to the Wandle Trail, near Trewint St. One possible route entails converting an old water tunnel under the Waterloo mainline embankment into a pedestrian tunnel. LB Merton are interested in principle and being on the borough border with Wandsworth both councils need to work together.

This would not eliminate the Wandle Trail gap but with the prospect of a trail extension at the south end of KGP it would reduce the gap by half. It would be a costly exercise and Network rail are likely to reject any work-related line closure so an alternative solution may be required.

Merton Priory

Merton Priory is not technically within the WVRP perimeter, (a fact that several people have questioned), but it is however critically important to the WVRP and is the most central focus of cultural heritage in the Wandle Valley helping to create with the Park and the Market, a critical mass that will benefit all stakeholders. It is therefore good news that plans to establish a proper sealed environment for it that will protect the artifacts and add to the comfort of visitors i.e. a proper on-site Museum. It will also give more

secure exhibition space to the hand copied calligraphy of the Magna Carta and the Statutes of Merton that Merton Cllr Richard Chellew has personally commissioned and that add to the interest of this treasure trove of history that should pull in thousands more visitors than it does currently.

Wandle Park Croydon

Hats off to Croydon who have nearly completed the remodelling of Wandle Park. It provides a dramatically different landscape than it did before. It had been little more than a useful playing field with a green fringe but now clever profiling of the earth works has changed it completely. Some aspects might seem a little daunting but once the grass is fully grown and new planting well established it will surely be a welcome local amenity and raise the profile of the once buried River Wandle closer to its source than for many decades.

Felnex Development Hackbridge

The huge development about to take place in Hackbridge will hopefully bring prosperity and added amenity to the local community. As this community has now found its voice with the encouragement of Sutton Council, having formed the Hackbridge & Beddington Corner Neighbourhood Development Group which includes BedZed residents, their aspirations can be clearly articulated. Hackbridge has huge potential to be both a development zone whilst hopefully retaining the underlying charm of the area to make an attractive Gateway to the Regional Park. The development should clearly provide an opportunity for rebuilding the Mile Road Bridge as part of a Section 106 agreement unless funding is found from the sources already asked. It will however be important to be sensitive to skyline views from the WVRP.

Incinerator adjacent to Beddington Farmlands

The case has been made against the Viridor Incinerator in spite of the reassuring presentations to the Hackbridge Group (above). That the HPA (Health Protection Agency) is still researching the advisability on safety grounds, of

building incinerators in urban locations, even using the latest technology, is extremely worrying and the proximity to the Regional Park even with its partially masking 'bund' undermines the very spirit of what an urban park should stand for making it an absurd juxtaposition. We hope that the planning application will not succeed without major modification or preferably newer green technology alternatives to incineration.

The Ram Brewery: Along with Merton Priory and the mills, the Ram Brewery represents one of the major heritage sites on the Wandle. So imminent plans submission of a third scheme for this major development will be of great interest to the whole community. The previous plans have been turned down after a Public Inquiry agreed with the Wandsworth Society about over density, proximity of towers to the gas holders and many other objections. The lesson from the first two plans is that whilst treatment of the Wandle river banks may on the face of it have been quite attractive, it is negated by the proximity of over height, and over dense buildings. It is important for Wandsworth town centre and the WVRP that the design for this strategic site is handled with sensitivity to the importance of the river and its delta to the local landscape and pleasantness of the public domain..

Feathers Wharf, Wandle Delta: The planning saga of Feathers Wharf goes way back further than the Brewery but some of the consequences of inappropriate development apply to both. At present a planning application has not yet been submitted and I'm aware that the extension of the lease for the Waste Transfer Station on the Thames alongside it, takes the shine of its desirability and therefore its value for upmarket des-res. But rather than wait for a developer who might be some years away is it not an option with ultimate economic benefits to put up a landscape scheme for the land at the Wandle mouth (facing the Riverside West wildlife tranquillity zone) and seek funding for a design suitable for the Wandle mouth Gateway to the Wandle Valley Regional Park. A three meter wide riverside path on its own, is simply unacceptable.

Merton Abbey Mills Market: At Merton Abbey Mills market a problem has arisen between the stall holders and shops and the decision by the National Trust to permit a farmers market at Modern Hall Park. The Merton Abbey retailers vigorously supported by at least one local councillor are claiming a substantial loss of business adding to their existing anxieties about their leases, rents and basic viability. Clearly both establishments/ freeholders have a right to maximise their income in hard times but if one puts the other at risk of failure it becomes a concern to all stakeholders including the WF, the WVRP Trust as well as the local council. Without taking sides it is glaringly obvious that both these sites are critical access conduits for visitors to the Regional Park and the loss or withering away of the Merton Abbey craft market whose stall holders have no other support would be a major loss of economic, cultural and leisure amenity. We hope that at least some discussion can take place perhaps chaired by the council to limit the

overlap in opening times and retail offer so that the loss of revenue for the MAM market will not be a precursor to its demise.

Durnsford Rd Recreation Ground access to river
Merton & Wandsworth Councillors are finally getting together to discuss boundary issues along the Wandle. A number of Councillors walked as much of the route as they could on Saturday October 13th to try to see exactly where some of the access & connection glitches are. DeNica Fairman & Ivan Scott of the WPRA Wandle Connect Group have been giving tours to both sets of Councillors "on the ground" to show them the problems in the Wimbledon Park/Earlsfield Area. It's thought that this section of the river has been left as a "missing link" for so long because the boundary wiggles all over the river & therefore permissions & responsibilities are very hard to establish. However, thanks to a new Government initiative this problem is starting to be solved. *DeNica Fairman, Chair WPRA*

Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust

The second meeting of the WVRP Trust Board is on October 31. It's agenda includes a report on the progress of the Living Wandle Landscape Partnership Scheme (HLF fund award approx £2m) bid from Project Leader, Stephen Crabree. There is now an agreed list of projects in the final bid for funds including Merton Priory. There are also reports on a Wandle Investment Programme,

the reformed Working Groups and Planning Protocols. We will report back to members in detail on these topics and some items we hope to raise in the AOB section – these may depend on what comes out of the meeting. Of necessity there is still much admin on the WVRP Trust agenda to nail but plenty of topics of interest.

Forum Development

Name: As indicated at our last meeting, there is a feeling that the changes that have affected the WF should be marked by a change of name. The reasons are that a. the composition of the Wandle Forum has changed and b. The existence of the WVRP Trust and our presence on it, whilst clearly an achievement that the WF can lay partial claim to, does indicate some changes in our working relationships, procedures and long term role and position. As input into any decision to change we should consider.

1. The name Wandle on its own is limiting when the whole of the WVRP is within our remit.
2. The existence of the WVRP should have a halo effect on the WF, after all WVRP Trust has an, albeit modest, marketing budget with which to promote the park. It will include the WF on its website but we will benefit in a variety of ways from the association with the WVRP.
3. Trying to retain some continuity with the Forum's past will be beneficial as quite a lot has been achieved by Forum members and their organisations.

The choice will be put to members at this week's or the next meeting. Some early obvious contenders include: Wandle Community Network, Wandle Valley Forum, Wandle Valley Community Forum, but there must be more and varied alternatives out there. Please bring them to the AGM!

Constitution: The redrafting of the constitution is in hand but may not be quite ready to circulate at the AGM. My wish is that it says in straightforward and plain English what our aims are and how we operate. I would dearly love to lose the jargon and political correctness that seems to permeate our language and communications. Use of language designed to attract potential future funding should not be used if it confuses the very straight forward aims we wish to present. However I am advised that some concessions in this field may be necessary – Angela help!

Membership: Some 50 groups have made themselves known to the Forum by attending our meetings or the 'Wandleful World' Conference. As we have until recently only held two meetings a year that is quite impressive and we have recruited two new member organisations in the

last two meetings. Although not all of these groups attend every meeting it suggests that our coverage of local communities is quite broad, if not complete and this NewsUpdate is circulated to all stakeholders and interested parties on the WF email list. It is however important that we formalise membership to strengthen our credibility as a representative community organisation which can prove it has a representative membership. So if you have not already seen them they will appear at the AGM along with a nominal registration fee which we will need to vote on. It would be per organisation and a lesser sum for individuals.

Goodbye and thanks Alex. Hello and welcome Clare.

Our lifeline support at Groundwork, Alex Forrester, is being reassigned and will be replaced by Clare Baldock. We thank Alex for his support and patience in running our meetings which thanks to his efforts have always run smoothly. Welcome to Clare who I believe we will meet at the AGM. We will try and ensure that our meetings are sufficiently coherent and disciplined so that minute taking isn't too difficult.

Archimedes Screw turns

Congratulations to the National Trust their Archimedes Screw is now in full operation supplying power to the Green Technology Centre in Modern Hall Park. Although still not fully accessible to visitors it is visible from across the river. Landscaping will soon be completed. This

addition to the centre gives it the critical mass to attract visitors from afar as well as being a star educational feature for students. As such it is a welcome addition to the attractions of the River Wandle and the WVRP as a whole.

Living Wandle Landscape Partnership

Much work has been done by Project Officer Stephen Crabtree in moulding this £2m bid into the kind of shape that will be approved so releasing the funds set aside for it. As it is a large subject we will feature more information in the next issue with a full report on its progress. Projects cover both physical and education

headings and are scrutinized in detail by the HLF (Heritage Lottery Fund) staff. It is not an easy way to gain funds but all involved especially Wandle Trust, the lead partner, have put in a huge effort to win and then bring this programme of work to fruition.

Melanie's Walks

Melanie Nunzet (Friends of Mitcham Common) has a new programme of walks – an ideal way to get to know parts of the regional park you may not be familiar with. Reproduced from Melanie's own circular.

Date	Meeting place/time	Description
Thurs 25 Oct	Honeywood 7.30 pm	The Wondrous Wandle An illustrated talk by the authors of River Wandle Companion, Bob Steel and Derek Coleman. Call Sue Horne to book: 8773 0185
Sat 3 Nov	Cumberland Day Centre, Whitford Gardens, Mitcham 7.30 pm	Merton Mind Quiz They are famous for their quiz nights! £10 to include fish and chips, £5 if not eating, bring a bottle. Call Tess 8648 6565 or Mags 8715 6568 NOW!!
Wed 14 Nov	Honeywood 7.30 pm	The Wandle, River of Pleasure An illustrated talk by John Phillips about the gardens and leisure activities on the Upper Wandle through four centuries. Call the Honeywood on 8770 4297 to book.
Wed 21 – Sat 24 Nov	Charles Cryer Studio Theatre, Carshalton 7.45 pm	"The Real Thing" by Tom Stoppard (Sutton Amateur Dramatic Club) Call the Box Office on 8770 6990 or book online: www.suttontheatres.co.uk . Early next year the Club will be performing "The Calendar Girls" for charity.
Thurs 22 Nov	Honeywood 7.30 pm	The Beddington Orange House The Elizabethan orangery was the first English building designed for keeping exotic plants. An illustrated talk by John Phillips. Call Sue Horne to book: 020 8773 0185
Fri 30 Nov	St Mary's Church (details below) 10.00 am	Visit to the Honeywood -Walk though Beddington Park and Grove Park to the Honeywood Museum by Carshalton Ponds. Cost (£3) will include mince pie, tea/coffee and donation to museum. Return to Beddington Park at the end of visit. Must be booked in advance, please call or email.
Sat 1 Dec	Carshalton Ponds 2-6 pm	Carshalton Frost Fair The Friends of Honeywood and Ecological invite you to a Winter Fair alongside the Ponds in Honeywood Walk. Crafts, stalls, hog roast and events for all the family, including Santa's Grotto in the Honeywood.
Fri 4 Jan	Mitcham Golf Club	New Year Do! Come along for a post-Xmas treat. Tickets £15 to include light buffet, licensed bar available. Call Mags to book on 8715 6568.

Come and join us for an hour's walk around Beddington Park or Waddon Ponds every Friday morning at 10 am. Meet by St Mary's Church, Church Road, Wallington SM6 7NJ (Buses: 407 from Sutton, 463 from Mitcham). Refreshments available at church after walk. Contribution to church funds please. Tour of church possible.

Please contact me if you'd like details of how to join the **Friends of Mitcham Common** or the **Mitcham Cricket Green & Community Heritage Group**.

Exhibition at the Honeywood: 17 October – 13 January – **A Discovery in Beddington Park**, the results of this summer's excavations on the site of the Beddington Portioner's House, a lost medieval and 18th century building near St Mary's Church.

Walks led by Rita Hunt – Tel: 8540-1560. Meet 10 am sharp at Colliers Wood Library (near tube station)

Sunday 4 November – Mortlake to East Sheen

Sunday 9 December – Greenwich

Nature Reserve workdays, all are welcome

Wilderness Island – Last Sunday of the month – Meet 10.30 am at junction Mill Lane/Strawberry Lane
Spencer Road Wetland – First Saturday of the month – Meet 11 am at end of Spencer Road, Hackbridge
Carew Manor Wetland – 2nd Sunday in month – Meet 10.30 am second car park behind cottages, Beddington Park
Mitcham Common – Sunday 4 Nov and Sunday 2 Dec – Meet 10.00 am Mill House Ecology Centre, Windmill Road

Walk Contact details: mlnunuzet@gmail.com or 07944 833605

Melanie Nunzet

Editors Note. These are only some of the stories we are aware of in the Wandle Valley. If you have stories, topics, or issues to raise please email the editor at the address below.

Please pass this Newsletter on to whoever you think would be interested in reading it.

Wandle Forum contact address: bsjb@onetel.com. Telephone 020 8874 6966