



# Wandle Valley Forum NEWS<sup>U</sup>DATE

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## A New Species in a Bigger Pond

Greetings to all Forum members and apologies that this edition of the news update has been delayed but so much has been happening that taking the action required of us has taken precedence over talking about it – a sign of how demanding our role is. We have twice the meetings we used to have and no LA support although Groundwork do our minute taking and circulate our messages and indeed this newsletter – with you'll notice, its new banner incorporating our new logo. But we have a short pause prior to our next Executive meeting and main Forum meeting so here goes.

It is becoming apparent that the Wandle Valley Forum, being an umbrella association for all local groups concerned with the Wandle Valley has to operate on a basis tailored to its resources. This is because we are by definition different to our members who have scores, hundreds even thousands of their own members. We have a couple of representatives of each of our member groups and an Executive of six. Which means running the Forum is down to very few people. This is not a complaint or a cry for help by the way, it is simply the reality in being an

umbrella group. Of course we can call on our members to take action but I can't draft in, for example my Wandsworth Society members, without going through channels and fitting in with their own full agenda. Same applies from the Wandle Trust to Mitcham Common Conservators, or Hackbridge Community Forum to Friends of Ravensbury Park. Each member group has its own agenda and priorities, and OK the Wandle is usually

high on the priority list but we are not the only 'game in town'.

This is why we have restricted our role for the time being to what we can manage i.e. vital networking on river and WVP issues – we can't respond or wave red cards or cry for help if we

don't know what's going on in the Valley. It would be difficult for those wanting to consult us to reach each group separately without our central support, like the Sustrans consultation or Wandle Trust Catchment Plan, and WVRP Big Green Fund, Watermeads initiatives. We have also recently started to monitor planning applications (see below) a key role that could help protect the Valley's open landscape from some huge developments.



WVRP, King George's Park

## **It's wellies-on time**

This may bring some reality to our aspirations but remember it is our members who define the agenda and the Forum can then provide support. But perhaps this is not enough and why I will be making a proposal at the next Forum meeting April 25<sup>th</sup> that the Forum should offer to muster its members' members to work on a wellies-on project at least once a year under the direction of the Wandle Trust, National Trust, Groundwork or

## **Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee has had one successful meeting and is due for its second. The constitution has been drafted and now incorporates many useful suggested revisions and will be circulated at the next Forum for adoption at this year's AGM. This will be in tandem with Executive members finalising formal member registration proposals without which we can't be properly constituted. The Exec' also looked at the issue of

## **Funding Opportunities**

We may not yet in a position to go for funding projects, such as the Mayor's big Green Fund, the Pocket Park Fund or Natural England's mini project Funds but members own groups are of course free to apply with whatever limited support we can provide. This is linked to the fact that unlike some of our members we are not, at this stage, a registered charity. This is

## **Living Wandle Landscape Partnership bid results soon.**

The timing of the 'Forum Conference' event, (see below) is scheduled in the hope that the results of the Heritage Lottery Fund, LWLP phase 2 bid result will be known by then. Stephen Crabtree will hopefully be able to announce the award of the Phase 2 bid for nearly £2m for a list of important projects including major work on the Merton Priory museum project, Morden Hall Park

other competent body with a project that needs people power. Cleaning up the river is an obvious starting point but other projects may be considered. This might in the long term be incorporated into the Wandle Weekend or a Wandle Trust project. Of course some of our members are already riverbed walker vets and know the kind of positive results and fun that can result. Your views will be welcome.

Website and social media which debate will be picked up at future meetings. The Forum's conference plan was also reviewed in detail and amended (see below). However the Forum's page on the WVRP website is written and up along with many other pages written by other members help including myself. So thanks to Angela, Melanie, Marianne, Ziggy, DeNica and Ivan for your valued input so far.

a time consuming business and requires that the group is properly constituted and clear about its purpose. Even the WVRP has found it a difficult and time consuming process on this front perhaps because the scope of its remit being so wide. We will keep this subject on the long term agenda.

Board Walk, Ravensbury Park river channel, volunteer education, eradicating invasive species, housing estate and school engagement in river related care and protection, WVRP gateway projects now coordinated into a coherent strategy and several other smaller scale projects included in the Wandle Trusts Catchment Plan.



## **‘How Green is Our Valley’ Community Launch Event June 19<sup>th</sup>**

We have accepted the challenge of mounting an event in cooperation with the WVRP. The “How Green is Our Valley” event is, as it says on the invitation “a community launch and celebration of the Wandle Valley Regional Park”.

The underlying theme is headed the “Wow Factor”. Why? Well most of us don’t need to be told what a treasures this remarkable chain of open spaces has to offer. It will create a synergy that far exceeds the sum of its parts. The history, biodiversity, landscape and space for sport truly defy belief in a location so close to central London – and yet ‘not a lot of people know that’.

We have already secured specialist speakers, some, our members, and some leading specialists in heritage, birdlife (Peter Alfrey). green energy (Bill Dunster), Merton Priory (John Hawk) to bring us up to date on the remarkable assets and opportunities in the Valley and

as such it is a great opportunity to promote the Wandle Valley Forum and the work we and our members do.

**So if you would like to attend and participate please email your name to Groundwork (address as per sender of this email) and we will try and accommodate all who would like to come.** If we can’t we will need to spread the invitations fairly amongst all stakeholder groups – so please let us know asap. (head your email “Launch Event Request”).

There will be opportunities for member groups to display their posters and literature at the event. A £6 charge will be requested on entry to cover catering and drinks.

**Event: Wed June 19<sup>th</sup> 10.00 – 16.00hrs,  
TNT Stadium (The Hub),  
Bishopsford Rd, Mitcham.  
5 mins walk from Mitcham tram stop.**

## Watermeads & the Mayor's Big Green Fund.

We always knew the CEO of the Wandle Valley Park was hard working and dynamic, cramming at least 3 days effort into his two salaried days. Forum executive members can receive emails 24/7 and often round midnight! Well now Peter has excelled himself having virtually single-handedly put in a bid based on consultation he set up for a major project to open up access to the off-limits area around the Hub sports

stadium. It is especially pleasing because it is one of the 'blue sky' projects that has long been on the Forum's wish list. Finally that fenced off section of river with its glimpses of mysterious sections of open culvert surrounded by exotic looking jungle will be partially open to public access. As a highly sensitive biodiversity area access will be limited but at last the path will again be able to follow the river and afford views into the wilderness.

## WTCP & WVRP

The Wandsworth Town Centre Partnership met to consider what is in effect, Phase II regeneration featuring mainly the Ram Brewery (see below). The need to acknowledge the regional park which follows the river through the

town centre and to make it an attractive park gateway at its mouth with the Thames was stressed as was the importance of routing the Wandle Trail along the river bank with adequate space for shoppers, walkers and bikers.

## Could AFC Wimbledon return to Wandle Valley?

There are a number of sites in the Borough of Merton's Local Development Framework, formally the Unitary Development Plan, which are close to the Wandle. The sites in the Wimbledon Park area include Site 64 and Site 70 which back on to the Wandle in Ravensbury Terrace, Site 71, Homebase off Durnsford Road, Site 37 Wimbledon Stadium and Site 50 at the end of Waterside Way. These sites have been put forward for

redevelopment but planning applications have yet to be received but proposals abound, one of which includes the return of AFC Wimbledon to Site 37. Any applications should include, where applicable, public paths along the river, especially Sites 64 and 70 which could form part of the closure of the 'Earlsfield Link'. The LDF extends throughout the LB Merton and all other Boroughs must have their own.

*Ivan Scott*

## Birds, Bees & Bugs

I attended an RSPB 'Meadows in the City' conference at City Hall and learned much about the decline in bird numbers experienced in recent years. Much of this can be put down to a lack of the right kind of bugs and a reduction in pollination by bees. Various GLA initiatives are underway to address this problem. Whilst I'm no specialist it was interesting to hear about the studies done on the best vegetation to attract the insects that will in turn sustain a rich and varied bird population – clearly highly relevant to the regional park. Tests were carried out

using three different combinations of seeds, long grass, native flowers, wildlife seed plots. I won't go into the debate on the merits of native species as opposed to non-native (apparently a hot topic), nor the benefits of many species of Ringwort, or the need for variety to support the maximum number of species. However it was interesting and highly relevant to be told a study of bee corridors suggests that the WVRP could be a significant corridor for important insects and consequently birds more common in rural areas to access inner city areas. **BSJB**

# **PLANNING ISSUES**

Commenting on planning applications has turned out to be an important task for the Forum and one that can take up a lot of time but is essential if we are to get the quality of development that will support communities aspirations for the WVRP.

With member groups covering most of the area of the WVRP from the Thames to Croydon and Carshalton we are well placed to monitor what is being proposed. We receive applications from LA Planning Depts. that are in proximity to the park and river and respond as appropriate to protect landscape views and sensitive open space from intrusion.

It also provides us the opportunity to offer ideas and constructive comments – it's not and should never be, an opportunity for NIMBYISM.

Applications for the Incinerator ('ERF') in Sutton or the Ram Brewery have important economic and legal implications and we need to present rational and balanced views.

Below are summaries of the responses we have made formally and informally so far, some at early consultation stage to the more important planning applications. We do this in support of local groups and in the interests of the Valley as a whole.

## **Hackbridge Village Regeneration**

Summary of letter sent to BioRegional who are tasked with the regeneration of Hackbridge Village at a time when the big Felnax development is about to proceed and will become a major scene changer for the local community – hopefully for the better. The Hackbridge network were very much in evidence at the consultation (see their website for details).

"These points include comment on Felnax without which it is impossible to discuss village regeneration meaningfully without understanding the pros, cons and opportunity posed by this development.

### **1. Gateway and Village potential**

The perspective given below is from the Wandle Valley Forum whose members' interests encompass the whole of the Wandle Valley Regional Park its approaches and environs. We see Hackbridge Village as potentially one of the most attractive access points to the park as well as being a potentially charming village in its own right. We are encouraged by your acknowledgment of the feedback from the local community and the support you have set up for local businesses.

### **2. Keeping or Losing local retailers**

If one of the aims of regeneration is to protect local business, then their briefing and understanding of the short term economic scenario is crucial in helping retain the village ambiance and reduce the threat of takeover by national chains buying up village center freeholds and leases in advance of the development. For example the value of property and leases in the village will inevitably rise, probably have already. This and the resulting market forces pose both opportunities and threats for them. The threat of existing local retailers leaving either because rent rises force them to or because of the windfall in freehold value may mean key local community members will sell and be dispersed taking away that essential aspect of village life - village shops. The better they are prepared for the potential growth from future development the more will endeavour to stay and improve their premises.

### 3. Felnex

Although a master plan has been approved it is important that as far as possible the retail elements of the development 'faces' the village rather than turn its back on it. Centrale House is far from ideal as the main road 'gateway' to the new retail complex however this is partly dependent on what its ground floor includes by way of secondary access or retail outlets. It is important that the interface with the village creates a harmonious and synergistic whole rather than a separate entity. So things like the access routes linking the village and WVRP park gateway as well as the station, are important.

### 4. Wandle-village links & Culvers Lodge

Unfortunately Felnex lies between the Wandle and WVRP and the Wandle Trail the river being no more than a back water at this point. The desire lines noted on an early plan of the development should be acknowledged thus creating access (cafes, craft market etc) to the river helping connect it to the village. A second point that has arisen is the threat to Culvers Lodge which currently provides a charming entrance to the Wandle access link at Medland Close (225m north of the village centre). Is it possible that Felnex Section 106 funding or CIL funding could play a role in preserving this prominent village gateway property.

### In conclusion

Whatever the final conclusions on the Hackbridge Village regeneration project and much of the detailed proposals have real merit, it must be seen as complementing the final Felnex plans, rather than being overridden by them. I hope BioRegional is sympathetic to the points made above and will not only be the facilitator of regeneration to Hackbridge Village but a benign influence on the village interface with the Felnex development and its major regional park. **BSJB** (BioRegional have responded positively to these points.)

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## **The Incinerator - The Energy Recycling Facility.**

Serious objections have been made against Viridor's ERF proposal and let's call an incinerator an incinerator no matter how new the latest tech is for burning rubbish and containing dioxins. As incinerators go it is probably one of the best but there are two questions that must be answered by Sutton council and the community.

1. Is an incinerator adjacent to a new regional park and close to high density urban housing the best place for a facility that when working 100% efficiently may only release minute amounts of highly toxic particulates.
2. Is the facility sustainable given the projected shortage of feed stock and the development of the radically more efficient next generation technology advances.

Taking the first point. How often does London announce a new park of regional standing? Answer: hardly ever. So the news of the plans for the facility immediately undermine the perceptions of the value of the WVRP with its precious biodiversity and the prevailing winds that will blow whatever's in the air towards Croydon. The thing about dioxin's is that it only takes an almost unmeasurably tiny amount to damage health, especially in young people. The HPA says they have failed to find a link with damage but are conducting further studies, but experience tells us that safe thresholds for such toxic particles (radioactive or chemical) are consistently lowered as long term population health studies become available. No quick systemic review

is going to throw up reliable results – it may take a decade or more. In the meantime those that don't apply the Precautionary Principle need broad shoulders to take responsibility if even small accidents occur. Remember this is not a remote coastal location – it's in Greater London!

The second point is that in spite of the clear need for Sutton and other SW councils to meet European landfill commitments there is considerable debate in the ERF industry about the availability of feedstock, our unrecyclable rubbish, which may lead to recyclables being diverted to incineration. Meanwhile completely new anaerobic digestion and plasma technologies are being piloted that offer the possibility of avoiding toxic waste byproducts altogether and lower process power consumption. This is admittedly not an easy choice for the council to make. Except that the plant's specification and burning efficiency is based on perfect running. That is a condition that cannot be guaranteed and therefore as the effects of toxin escape can, like radio-activity be so devastating to health it should add weight to selecting alternative routes. The economic risk to Virodor should also not be underestimated as the return on capital may evaporate faster than expected.

So we ask that Sutton Council please, seek independent consultants capable of evaluating the real life risks to health, funding, and the likely time frame for new more efficient technology to become available and insist on a transparent incident reporting regime should the ERF proceed.

**BSJB**

## **Ram Brewery Wandsworth**

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Summary of letter on draft planning application for the Ram Brewery site that straddles the Wandle in Wandsworth Town Centre.

We "... submit the following comments relating to the Ram Brewery development:

**We welcome:**

1. The treatment of listed buildings and the continuation of the brewing tradition.
2. The river bank treatment by the High St and footbridges over the River Wandle.
3. The retention in place of the old stables.

**We are concerned about:**

**The WVRegional Park**

Whilst recognising that the location is a town centre and therefore large buildings will be in proximity to the river it is however a river that is part of the Wandle Valley Regional Park and acknowledging this is important and can help mark the town centre as a



View north from Wandsworth High St, towards tower block pinch point, top left & break in west bank path lower left.

regional park gateway. The development of the Ram Brewery clearly provides the opportunity to reconnect the Trail which currently

### **The Wandle Trail**

Although there is a path along most of both sides of the River there still appears to be inadequate provision and several squeeze points, for the anticipated growth in pedestrian /cycle/shopper buggy traffic once the development itself is complete. The Regional Park will also start attracting visitors along what will, de facto, be the Wandle Trail, especially on crowded summer weekends when outdoor café customers may encroach on the

### **The Tower Block**

The 36 floor tower block is within only a few feet of the river banks with the side of its triangular form being broadside to the river, completely overwhelming it. The thickened base of the tower accommodating expanded floorspace on two sides is unacceptable on the grounds of unnecessarily limiting path width and undermining the already minimal aesthetics of its rather stout

### **Heritage & the last Inspectors report**

The underlying issue remains the latest planning application fails to respond to the Planning Inspector's Report findings of the previous almost identical submission in terms of mass. The Ram Brewery is of sufficient historic importance to be not only one of Wandsworth's but one of the WVRPs major heritage attractions, especially with four centuries of brewing tradition, currently kept alive with the micro-brewery.

We recognise the importance of this scheme to the future quality and prosperity of the town centre which is

diverts around Southside and Wandsworth Plain to the Thames making the town centre a significant gateway for WVRP visitors.

already limited space. The riverside is of course the ideal place for such cafes/restaurants etc and clearly it is also where the Wandle Trail needs to be. The favoured solution would be to move the riverside blocks further back as this would *reduce shadow* however taking the paths under the buildings is an option that is preferable to the current width limits. Making the riverbanks steeper to gain more path width is not acceptable.

proportions which also screens out sunlight from the west. Whilst not ruling out a point block completely it's aesthetics and form should acknowledge its proximity to the conservation area and the townscape skyline as a whole. This is not therefore an appropriate design and it needs to give more space for the riverbank path.

and density and indeed fails to meet the council's own guidelines. This undermines the whole scheme and detracts from some of its better features.

why it is so important to get it right without further delay. The irony is that if the council's own guidelines are followed the development could create one of the most pleasant shopping centres in south west London – a shopping centre with a regional park running through it, surely lifting its status amongst riverside town centres to its economic benefit.

**BSJB**

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# Wandle Weekends

June 1 & 2, 8 & 9

Vicki and her team of festival Trustees are gearing up for this year's Wandle Weekends. There will be a host of activities and exhibits at several locations in each of the four boroughs along the river. For detailed information see website: [www.wandlefestival.com](http://www.wandlefestival.com)

## EVENTS:

Sat 1 & 8 June: **Treasure Trove of History**. Wandsworth Museum. 38 West Hill SW18 1RX  
From 'fruit of the river' Roman coins to childrens toys

Sat 1& 8 June: **Hidden Heritage** – Mrs Stirling 'at home' in landmark Battersea House  
The eccentricities of a bygone era

Sun 2 June: **Community Picnic**. Wandle Park, Colliers Wood, SW19. 12.00 – 17.00  
**Free guided tour** of historic Morden Hall Park. 11.30 -14.30

See the Snuff Mill, and Archimedes screw pushing water uphill!  
Sat 8/Sun 9: **Short Walks** 11.30 – 12.30 & **Ramblers** All Wandle Walk, 9.30 – 17.00  
A choice of walks along the remarkable River Wandle

Sat 8 & Sun 9: **Life Under the Surface**, Sutton 10.00-16.00  
Learn about life from a frogs point of view!

Full details of these and more at: [www.wandlefestival.com](http://www.wandlefestival.com)

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## Wandle Valley Forum Membership List

The following member groups in bold have recently attended our regular meetings and those in regular type have been to meetings and/or attended the Wandle conference. This list may need updating so please inform us if you know of any inaccuracies as we prepare to introduce formal membership registration.

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|---|--|
| 1. <b>Beddington Farmlands Bird Group</b>             | 28. Croydon Rifle & Pistol Club          |
| 2. <b>Beddington &amp; Grange Park , Friends of</b>   | 29. Cycling Campaign                     |
| 3. <b>Bedzed Residents Bridge Campaign</b>            | 30. Friends of the Cannons               |
| 4. <b>BedZed Pavillion</b>                            | 31. Friends of the River Crane           |
| 5. <b>Carshalton Water Tower &amp; Histricl Trust</b> | 32. KNK Sports Ground (formerly The Hub) |
| 6. <b>Deen City Farm</b>                              | 33. Haydon's Bridge Residents Assoc      |
| 7. <b>Groundwork London</b>                           | 34. Merton Cycling Campaign              |
| 8. <b>Hackbridge &amp; BC Neighbrhd Dev Group</b>     | 35. Pedal4Health                         |
| 9. <b>LWT London Wildlife Trust</b>                   | 36. Pollards Hill Cyclists               |
| 10. <b>Metropolitan Public Gardens Assoc</b>          | 37. Merton Abbey Traders                 |
| 11. <b>Mitcham Cricket Green Com &amp; Heritage</b>   | 38. Riverside Animal Centre              |
| 12. <b>Mitcham Common Conservators</b>                | 39. Sambook's Brewery                    |
| 13. <b>Mitcham Society</b>                            | 40. South Thames College                 |
| 14. <b>Morden Hall Park (NT)</b>                      | 41. Streatham Society                    |
| 15. <b>Merton Priory Trust</b>                        | 42. Rainbow Productions                  |
| 16. <b>National Trust</b>                             | 43. Village Residents Assoc (Mitcham)    |
| 17. <b>Ravensbury Park, Friends of</b>                | 44. Waddon & Broad Green                 |
| 18. <b>SUSTRANS</b>                                   | 45. Walking for Health, Ramblers         |
| 19. <b>Wandle Festival Trust</b>                      | 46. Walk London                          |
| 20. <b>Wandle Industrial Museum</b>                   | 47. Wandle Heritage & Community          |
| 21. <b>Wandle Lower Ramblers</b>                      | 48. Wandle Lower Ramblers                |
| 22. <b>Wandle Trust</b>                               | 49. Wandsworth Cycling Campaign          |
| 23. <b>Wimbledon Park Residents Assoc</b>             | 50. Wandsworth Museum                    |
| 24. <b>Wimbledon Park Anglers Club</b>                | 51. Whitehorse Youth Centre              |
| 25. <b>Wandsworth Society</b>                         | 52. Wild London                          |
| 26. <b>Wandsworth TC Partnership</b>                  | 53. Wimbledon Society                    |
| 27. <b>All Saints Community Centre</b>                |  |
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# Melanie's Walks



Path that skirts Beddington Farmlands from which the amazing birdlife can be seen

Melanie Nunzet has probably introduced more people to the secret delights of the Wandle Valley than anyone else. Although her current walk programme has run half its course there are still three fascinating walks to come.

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|------------|---|
| Sat Apr 28 | Beddington Farmlands<br>A walk through 'no man's land' the forbidden territories' between Mitcham Common and Beddington Park.<br>Unique views of birdlife at a place where well over 100 species Visit each year.<br>Start: Mitcham Junction 11.00. 3-4 miles |
| Sat May 11 | Mitcham to Carshalton<br>The quieter reaches of the Wandle and some charming scenery and heritage to be seen.   |
| Sun June 2 | Morden Hall Park to Waddon Ponds.<br>The lesser known heritage gems of the Wandle on a walk with a country town feel to it.<br>Start: Snuff Mill, Morden Hall Park, 13.45. 5-6 miles.   |