

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT FORUM HELD ON TUESDAY, 30TH MARCH, 2021

MEMBERS: Councillors Anne Brown, Katherine Chibah (Chair) and Lindsay Rawlings

Andrew Newman – Clay Hill Study Group
Rex Bourne – Edmonton Hundred Historical Society
Denise Gandhi – Southgate Green Study Group
Paul Hutchinson – Grange Park Conservation Area Study Group
Robert Wilson – Hadley Wood Conservation Area Study Group
John West – the Enfield Society
Carol Cragoe – Enfield Town Conservation Area Study Group
Ann Bishop Laggett – Federation of Enfield Residents and Allied Associations
Carol Fisk – Trent Park Conservation Committee

Officers: Sarah Cary (Executive Director Place), Dominic Millen (Transport and Policy), Ian Russell (Engineer Watercourses Team Highways), Jeanette Walsh (Interim Deputy Head of Planning), Helen Murch (Head of Strategic Planning), Edward Jones (Plan Maker), Penelope Williams (Governance and Scrutiny)

Also Attending: Stephen Walls (Enfield Town Residents Association)

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Aksanoglu, Dennis Stacey and Juliet Barnett.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

3. REWILDING AND TREE PLANTING

The forum received a presentation from Ian Russell on rewilding and tree planting schemes in the borough.

1. Presentation

The following points were highlighted during the presentation:

- The key definition of rewilding is the largescale restoration of ecosystems to the point where nature can take care of itself.
- A good example of this is the reintroduction of the beaver into areas where it had been extinct. Their habit of damming rivers helps to prevent flooding and creates new habitats bringing in other species.

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Other examples include wild pigs rooting round in the soil encouraging worms. Smaller creatures provide food for predators.

- Aspirations include reversing the loss of biodiversity, restoring ecosystems, reigniting passions for the natural world, providing opportunities for diversification and revitalisation of local economies, reintegrating nature for the benefit of all and reintroducing key species where it makes sense. These are part of the London Plan good growth policies.
- In 1700 large parts of the borough were forested as part of Enfield Chase. Only small fragments of this ancient woodland still exist but the Council owns areas of farmland, parks and golf courses in the North West of the borough and some of these areas could be turned back into woodland.
- Today much of the farmland is currently bare brown soil – desert like.
- In Epping Forest rewilding techniques have been used to reintroduce cattle to manage the open parts of the forest. A forest is not just a close canopy of trees, but also glades and open meadows.
- Rivers are key to managing flood risk. The borough has three major water ways, Turkey Brook, Salmons Brook and Pymmes Brook which cross the borough from west to east, feeding into the River Lee. If the farmland in the north west is not drained appropriately it will create flood risks in Edmonton in the South East. Natural flood management holds water on the land and prevents flooding. Straightening parts of rivers, which was often carried out in the past, means that the water flows more quickly and also increases flood risk. Work is being done in Enfield parks to create wetlands and restore meanders to help soak up water, as well as creating more diverse habitats.
- Woodland recreation is also key. With the help of the GLA, the National Lottery, Thames 21 and the Forestry Commission the Council is planting over 100,000 trees along the London Loop. Originally it had been hoped to involve the public in the tree planting, but this had not been possible up until now because of the pandemic.
- There were multiple benefits of rewilding in terms of public health, increasing biodiversity, reducing flood risk, restoring heritage landscapes, reduced pollution and increasing carbon capture.
- The Enfield Chase tree planting project will on average capture 234 tonnes of carbon every year contributing to Enfield's Climate Change Action Plan targets.

2. Questions/Comments

2.1 The trees being planted were very small and would not be able to capture a lot of carbon in their early years but will capture much more later, over the next 25 years. The figures quoted were the average of a tree's lifetime.

2.2 Opportunities for natural regeneration were also being encouraged by managing parks, such as Oakwood and Hillyfields, much less intensively and allowing trees to seed themselves.

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2.3 The Council was working closely with local farmers to encourage better land management and more tree planting schemes. There was a biodiversity crisis which needed addressing. This could be done by taking areas back to their natural state. Enfield's farmland was relatively poor - grade 3. Before the second world war it would have been pastoral rather than arable land. Farmers would be able to claim payments for this type of land use but the details have still to be sorted out.

2.4 It was hoped that they would be able to introduce beavers into the borough. The details of a possible scheme were being worked out and would be announced soon.

2.5 A lot of funding is being provided for infrastructure works along the London Loop including gravel paths, safe road crossings and amenity features. These would be being put in place in June or July this year.

2.6 If cattle were to be used in parkland areas they would be carefully managed. The scheme would involve only one animal per hectare to ensure that land did not become compacted and animals would be checked to ensure that they were docile.

2.7 There were no plans to drive food growing out of the borough, but there were ways of managing land more effectively. There was a lot of open land in Enfield but a lot of it was not open to the public. There were other types of farming such as market gardening and agro-forestry which could be more effective uses of farm land.

2.8 The plans were to improve Enfield's heritage landscapes. Money had been received from the Heritage Lottery Fund. There was a view that Forty Hall had been badly managed and too many scrub oaks allowed to take root. The borough had a history of exceptional park land landscapes and a lot of archaeological heritage which was not always appreciated. The Council were hoping to give the new trees long term protection through appropriate management strategies. Changing subsidy regimes should help ensure that the land can be managed more appropriately than in the past.

2.9 There did not seem to be a need to designate land for forestry at this time.

2.10 There was some concern that changing priorities meant that trees planted now could be removed in the future, as had happened in the past.

2.11 There was less opportunity for Enfield to influence the rewilding along the Lee Valley Corridor as this was owned by the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority and Thames Water. However the new Blue and Green Strategy hoped to encourage greater access to and use of the green spaces of the Lee Valley. New parks and open spaces were also planned as part of the Meridian Water development.

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2.12 Concern about the removal of mature trees from people's gardens in the Hadley Wood area. Thirty percent of trees in Enfield were in suburban gardens and many were being removed. It was felt that these trees should be valued more highly.

2.13 Along the Salmon's Brook there were a lot of very mature trees but not many younger trees. When the old trees died, they were not often replaced. Salmon's Brook was being looked at as a key habitat within the urban environment. This issue would be raised with colleagues.

2.14 It was felt that there should be more encouragement and information provided to educate local people on the benefits of enabling sustainable features, such as the value of ponds and of allowing gardens to be rewilded.

2.15 The Council should also allow the grass along verges to grow longer.

2.16 Interpretation boards in parks and open spaces might help in this respect. Some education work was taking place with Thames 21 officers and in schools.

2.17 It was suggested that protecting garden trees and tree preservation orders could be a subject for discussion at a future meeting.

3. Summing Up by Chair

The chair thanked Ian Russell for his very interesting presentation and acknowledged the benefits of rewilding to the environment and public health. She looked forward to hearing about the reintroduction of the beaver in Enfield.

4. LOCAL PLAN POLICIES

The forum received a presentation on the work being done to draw up a vision for the Local Plan.

1. Presentation

Ed Jones, Principal Planner in the Plan Making Team, highlighted the following from his presentation:

- The vision for the Local Plan was a succinct framing statement, supported by several strategic objectives and underpinned by four guiding principles.
- It had been put together following a series of engagement workshops including with the youth parliament held in February.
- A survey was also carried out to capture a wider range of views.
- Wider Council strategies were also taken into account.
- Members told the team that Enfield offered the best of town and country and needed to remain a place of green attractive

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neighbourhoods with a good quality of life. Growth should be focused on quality and be supported by infrastructure.

- The Youth Parliament felt that Enfield should be a place of future opportunity where east/west disparities could be addressed, a green place with access to nature.
- There were 278 responses to the survey; 65% of these were from white British and over the age of 50. This was not representative as only 31% of Enfield residents are over 50 and 35% estimated to be white British.
- In the survey 72% supported the view of a deeply green Londoner and 63% a family retreat. There was least support (12%) for a self-sufficient borough.
- Sustainable movement was a clear priority.
- Sixty six percent wanted Enfield to meet all the housing needs. More people than not wanted to meet the Mayor of London's housing target.
- Environmental aspirations were strong. Sixty six percent thought that Enfield should be an intergenerational place.
- Sixty one percent thought that built heritage should be prioritised with 49% supporting a mix of suburbs, town centres and regeneration areas. There was least support for tall buildings.
- The most popular choice in setting a spatial vision was for improved biodiversity and networks of green spaces to improve health and wellbeing.
- The least popular choices were for providing housing even if it meant building tall buildings, providing industrial and logistics needs if it meant building on countryside areas and intensifying our town centres.
- There was support for meeting needs in principle but not necessarily for the spatial consequences of meeting the needs.
- There were only 15 responses from the under 30s and only twelve from councillors.
- The emerging vision was that by 2039 Enfield will have grown to be a place of opportunity for future generations, the green heart of London where new homes and jobs will help our communities thrive.
- The draft vision would be made up of four threads: a deeply green place; the workshop of London; a distinct and leading part of London; and a nurturing place.

2. Questions/Comments

2.1 Concern that not many of the members had completed the survey and that this was perhaps because it was not easy to provide answers to the questions posed. It was felt that there should be more space to provide a commentary, not just a yes/no response. This comment would be taken into account in developing future surveys.

2.2 This was the early stage in the development of the plan and there would be lots more opportunities for comment.

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2.3 There were tough choices to be made and that was why the questionnaire had been framed in this way. Using land for one purpose would mean it could not be used for another.

2.4 The local plan consultation had been reset due to the many contextual changes which had recently come in, including changes to the planning regulations and growing awareness of the need to take account of the climate change agenda. Earlier responses would also be included in the final analysis.

2.5 A new plan had to be put in place as the old plan was close to expiry. Timescales were laid down by the Government and were tight.

2.6 The officers were continually having to take on board changes in the process. However, the development of the plan was at an early stage and there would be room to take on a wider range of views in the future.

2.7 In practice the responses from this stage would feed into the draft plan which would be put out for consultation following approval at Council in June. There would be a formal consultation period in the Summer seeking views on the proposed approach, options and policies. Following a review of the consultations received, there would be a redraft and another stage of consultation. There were plenty of opportunities for further engagement before the fully worked up plan was created. Papers for the draft plan would be publicly available from 1 June 2021 with the council agenda.

2.8 It was emphasised that there needed to be greater efforts to engage with all sections of the borough's community.

2.9 It was hoped that by June/July there would be greater opportunities for face to face engagement, as lock down restrictions were lifted. Online engagement would also continue.

2.10 All the evidence collected so far will be published with the other papers with the agenda for the Council meeting on the 9 June 2021.

2.11 The new plan would be flexible and responsive. The situation was changing all the time particularly as a result of the recent pandemic. For example it was not clear whether people would go back to working in offices or whether other closer to home workspaces would be needed.

3. Summing Up by the Chair

The Chair thanked officers for the presentation and responses to questions. There was a lot to think about. The Local Plan was an important legislative framework which was changing dramatically. The process was continuing and there would be lots more opportunities for comment.

5. RETROFITTING - DOMESTIC AND COUNCIL BUILDINGS

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The forum received a presentation from Dominic Millen, Group Leader Transport Planning and Policy on retrofitting in domestic and council buildings.

1. Presentation

Dominic Millen highlighted the following in his presentation:

- In the Climate Action Plan the aim is for the Council to be carbon neutral by 2030 and for the whole borough to be by 2040.
- Retrofitting buildings involves making changes to improve energy efficiency, decarbonise heat and increase renewables and offsetting.
- Carrying out retrofitting is challenging but very worthwhile as buildings are responsible for most of the Council's carbon emissions. Borough wide housing on its own is responsible for 38% and retrofitting leads to healthier and wealthier neighbourhoods.
- There are specific challenges when dealing with conservation areas and heritage buildings, which might require different skills and approaches.
- The Council is joint lead borough for Retrofit London (alongside Waltham Forest), which is an opportunity to deliver retrofitting measures at scale across the capital.
- The Government Green Homes Grants Voucher Scheme was meant to support home-owners in carrying out their own retrofitting projects, although the take up has been lower than expected.
- Two retrofit pilot projects are taking place in Edmonton: one in thirty six individual homes using the Energiesprong model and another in a twenty two storey block, which includes replacing cladding combined with environmental and fire safety measures.
- The outcomes would be reduced running costs, improved health, the opportunity to test the approach and identify retrofit archetypes for future use. The challenges involved securing funding, delivering with the residents in situ and timescales and sector capacity.
- The possible expansion of the Energetik network into other boroughs will increase its reach. A retrofit pilot is looking to connect around 20 existing properties to the network.
- There is a long-term programme of investment in corporate retrofit including in schools, corporate buildings and leisure facilities.
- Recently Enfield had secured £3.8m from the Government for decarbonisation of corporate buildings. The main investment is likely to be at the Civic Centre but with various other sites also benefiting.
- Work was also proceeding on offsetting and renewables. The Council was helping to restore woodland in the North of the borough, investing in more street trees, looking at the approach to renewables in the community and taking part in the solar together group buying scheme.
- The priorities for 2021 were the delivery of the existing projects, council housing asset management sustainable strategy implementation, development of a pipeline of corporate retrofit projects including in schools, the retrofit London programme (with delivery of the related

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action plan starting in the Autumn) starting in the Autumn and lobbying government for funding and powers.

2. Questions/Comments

2.1 The material used to replace the cladding on buildings affected are the most effective materials from both a fire safety and retrofitting perspective.

2.2 A Schools Climate Action Network has been set up to support their journey to climate neutrality.

2.3 The current civic centre works involved the replacement of rotten wooden window frames along D block which is locally listed.

2.4 In the future suppliers will have to meet environmental standards and requirements will be included in tender documents. There were already standards for Non-Road Mobile Machinery (NRMM) as part of air quality measures.

3. Summing up by the Chair

The Chair thanked Dominic Millen for his interesting presentation and hoped that the forum could return to this subject in the future.

6. MINUTES FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 16 FEBRUARY 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2021 were received and agreed as a correct record.

7. REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

The Forum noted the current work programme.

Suggestions were made that the following topics be included in next year's workprogramme:

- Tree Preservation Orders
- Electric Vehicle Charging Points
- Whitewebbs Park

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

1. Electric Vehicle Charging Points

The Climate Action Plan indicated that there would be 250 additional charging points in the borough by 2025. As demand increased the Council will install more points. There is a project to provide charging points in lamp columns. People can lodge an expression of interest via the Council's website: <https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/roads-and-transport/electric-vehicle-charging/>. Rapid charging is part of the solution and may be provided in supermarket petrol stations and in town centre locations. There was also a

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requirement in the London Plan for developers to provide charging points in new developments. Further information could be provided at a future meeting of the forum.

2. Whitewebbs Park

Sarah Cary reported that the Council was close to making a decision on the future of the golf course in Whitewebbs Park, but an announcement had been held back due to purdah restrictions. A report would be back to a future meeting of the forum.

9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The forum noted the dates agreed for future meetings:

- Wednesday 28 April 2021