

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT FORUM HELD ON TUESDAY, 16TH FEBRUARY, 2021

MEMBERS:

Councillors: Mahmut Aksanoglu (Vice Chair), Anne Brown, Katherine Chibah (Chair) and Lindsay Rawlings

Dennis Stacey – Bush Hill Park Conservation Area Study Group

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

Juliet Barnet – Trent Park Conservation Committee

Peter Fisk – Forty Hill Conservation Area Study Group

Officers: Sarah Cary (Executive Director Place), Ned Johnson (Principal Health Safety and Pollution Officer), David Taylor (Head of Traffic and Transportation), Metin Halil (Governance and Scrutiny) and Penelope Williams (Secretary)

Also Attending: Sue Reuss, Carol Fisk, Simon Allin, Lorraine Hinds (Transport for London), Esther Johnson (Transport for London), Lydia Somnah, Helen Osman, Gail Nielen (Friends of Firs Farm)

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Mahmut Aksanoglu.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

3. COMMUNITY INITIATIVES SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

1. Enfield Society Tree Project

The forum received a presentation from John West (Enfield Society) on the Enfield Society Trees Project.

1.1 Presentation

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The following points were highlighted during the presentation:

- The overall aim of the Enfield Society was the conservation and enhancement of the civic and natural environment.
- The society managed a tree nursery at the Trentwood Side Allotments where they cultivate about 140 saplings a year, varying in size from small specimens to 3 metre high trees.
- People donate saplings, often found in their gardens, and these are grown on until they are ready to be planted in local parks and open spaces.
- The planting of native species is encouraged as well as European trees in decline such as the Mulberry and the Black Walnut.
- The Society work closely with the friends of the park's groups and the Council's arboricultural and parks' officers.
- Recently they have provided trees in Arnos Park, Bush Hill Park, Firs Farm Wetlands and the Weir Hall Recreation Ground.
- The Society are currently working with the Friends of Broomfield Park and on providing trees along the London Loop as part of the Enfield Chase Restoration project.
- Once trees are planted, local people are encouraged to monitor them to ensure that they survive.
- The Society has produced a book "Young Explorers" aimed at key stage 1 and 2 to encourage an interest in young people.
- Many Enfield trees were planted in the first half of the 20th century and were now reaching the end of their natural life and so needed replacing.
- The society is always looking for young saplings and sites that would benefit from a tree.

1.2 Questions/Comments

- 1.2.1 Members thanked John West for his presentation which they found very informative.
- 1.2.2 Trees were monolithed often to reduce root growth especially in street trees. There was some concern about this being done to trees in Trent Park. It was suggested that questions about this would best be addressed to the Council's arboricultural officer.
- 1.2.3 Concern about protecting the newly planted trees in Enfield Chase which were felt to be vulnerable to theft and vandalism.
- 1.2.4 The request that Bowes School along the North Circular be considered for future planting projects.

1.3 Summing up by the Chair

The Chair summed up by thanking John West for his presentation, referring the query on molithing trees to the Council's arboricultural officer and requesting that the Enfield Society book on tree spotting be made available to the Council to help promote.

2. Firs Farm Wetlands Project

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Helen Osman with Gail Nielen from the Friends of Firs Farm gave a presentation on the Firs Farm Wetlands Project.

2.1 Presentation

The following points were highlighted during the presentation:

- Firs Farm was originally farmland, used during the second world war as a prisoner of war camp and after as a playing field. But it had become dilapidated and underused in recent years.
- In 2013 Toni Guiver and others had decided that something should be done. They had leafleted the local community and got together a core group of people to form the Friends of Firs Farm. The Friends Group worked with the Council, Thames 21 and Thames Water and eventually manage to obtain £175,000 from the GLA to develop part of the playing fields as a wetland habitat and Community Park.
- This was based on five objectives - HERBS (Health, Education, Recreation, Biodiversity and Sport).
- Work took place from 2015 to 2017. Part of the Moore Brook which fed into Pymmes Brook was transformed from one of the most polluted rivers in the country into an attractive wetlands area. Hundreds of volunteers had taken part in the project and over 900 trees and shrubs planted. Nature had soon taken over to create this very attractive wetlands area. A local naturalist had recently found around 85 different species around the ponds.
- It had been a tremendous community achievement and an excellent example of collaboration between the Council, the community and corporate sponsorship. A lot of money had been raised for the project and fundraising was continuing for further works.
- Children had been at the heart of everything. Many child-based activities had been organised, including for National Children's Day, Halloween and a Winter Christmas Castle. Downloadable sheets were available as well as pond dipping activities, teddy bear and fairy hunts, mud kitchen and play area. Families and schools had all taken part in tree planting events.
- It had been extraordinary how many people had used the area during lockdown, even on freezing cold days.
- The wetlands had united people from both the east and the west of the borough.
- The project had more than met objectives. It had improved health and wellbeing, was an educational resource for local families and schools, provided recreational opportunities, creating a wild space for the community, reduced the risk of flooding, reduced pollution and encouraged more sporting activities.
- Even more sporting facilities were planned, including an upgrade to the changing rooms to create a new community hub. This project had stalled due to the pandemic, but would be pursued.

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- The wetlands had been achieved through strong community leadership. Special thanks were due to Toni Guiver who had lived and breathed the project, pushing it through despite many obstacles.
- There had been an enormous amount of community engagement especially involving children. Monitoring the number of visitors every year at specific entry points, the first year there had been 8 people, last year at the same point over 400.

2.2 Questions/Comments

- 2.2.1 Thanks and appreciation from the members for a fantastic example of community collaboration and an amazing achievement.
- 2.2.2 Councillors offered their help and support saying that they were always willing to engage with local residents on projects like this. Help with creating the community hub was requested. Money, time and staff help was always needed.
- 2.2.3 Litter was always a problem, particularly as numbers of visitors increased. It was addressed by volunteers who took part in regular litter picks.
- 2.2.4 Helen Osman said the Friends were always happy to talk to other groups to share their practice and experiences.
- 2.2.5 The Friends were also hoping to bring more sport to the park. Hiring out the sports pitches brought in regular income.
- 2.2.6 Thanks were given to sponsors, Thames 21 and Ian Russell at the Council for his great guidance and support.
- 2.2.7 It was suggested that that more should be done to co-ordinate activities in Enfield which was one of the greenest boroughs in London and to communicate what was being done. So much was happening and it did need to be pulled together.

2.3 Summing up by the Chair

The Chair thanked Helen Osman and Gail Nielen for their presentation. She said that it was important to bring together people working across the borough and to communicate what was being done. The more that is known about, the easier it is to provide support.

4. EXPANSION OF THE ULTRA LOW EMISSION ZONE (ULEZ)

The panel received a presentation from Lorraine Hinds and Esther Johnson (Transport for London) on the proposed expansion to the ultra low emission zone.

1. Presentation

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The following points were highlighted during the presentation:

- Air pollution in London was a huge problem responsible for many early deaths. The coroner had recently ruled in a landmark case that it caused the death of a young child Ella Kissi Debrah.
- Pollution was worst along major roads and in central London.
- The parameters of the extended ULEZ would run just inside the North and South Circular Roads. It would operate 24 hours a day every day except Christmas Day.
- EU directives on air pollution remained in place. There were 13 key pollutants. Nitrogen Oxide was one of the worst. Diesel vehicles were the most polluting. However, 80% of current vehicles were already compliant.
- The congestion charge area had been operating a ULEZ zone in Central London since April 2019
- Non-compliant vehicles would be charged £12 and lorries/buses and coaches £100 per day. Enforcement would take place using number plate recognition technology.
- Since the introduction of the central ULEZ, there had been a 44% reduction in pollution in the central zone and 441 fewer polluting vehicles on the road.
- The Zone was due to be expanded on 25 October 2021, up to but not including the North and South Circular roads.
- All vehicles will have to comply with the Euro 6 standard.
- A small part of the London Borough of Enfield would be included including the North Middlesex Hospital. Transport for London was working with hospital staff to ensure that the implementation would not deter patients and staff visiting the hospital.
- There were no resident discounts, but there were some exemptions. It would not be bought in until 2025 for disabled vehicles. Military and private hire vehicles would be exempt as well as historic vehicles more than 40 years old.
- Work is being done to raise awareness of the issue that everyone needs to check that vehicles are compliant with the new standard.
- A communications tool kit was available and could be accessed by local groups and organisations on request.
- All London buses already meet or exceed the target.
- A van scrappage scheme was also in place to help small businesses switch to cleaner vehicles.
- Over 3,900 zero emission capable taxis are already licensed to operate in London. Over 300 rapid charging points have already been installed by Transport for London and local boroughs are installing more.

2. Questions/Comments

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- 2.1 Councillor Brown asked for some information which she could forward on to her residents. Local groups were invited to get in touch: contact details and further information would be provided after the meeting.
- 2.2 The scheme was linked to the DVLA and should be up to date.
- 2.3 There was also support for low income households and registered disabled.
- 2.4 Concern that there was no discount for those living in the area and that the scrappage scheme was currently suspended.
- 2.5 There was a grace period up until October 2025 for blue badge holders.
- 2.6 It was emphasised that over 80% of vehicles already met the required standard and this number was increasing.
- 2.7 Transport for London was one of the functional bodies including MOPAC (the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime) and the London Fire Service for which the elected Mayor of London was responsible for. People voted for the Mayor to administer Transport for London.
- 2.8 Concern that pollution was affecting children in schools across the borough and the view that the ULEZ should be extended to the M25.
- 2.9 Air pollution was a major problem within the North and South Circular roads. Outer London was less badly affected.
- 2.9 The need for monitoring to ensure that pollution around the North Circular in Enfield did not increase as a result of the zone.
- 2.10 There were complex arguments, including economic, for and against an extension to the M25 boundary, but most members expressed support for an extension.

3. Summing up by the Chair

The Chair agreed that this was an issue that needed careful consideration. She felt that there was a need to wait and see what the impact of the current extension of the zone would be before considering extending further. It was a good move forward for the environment and hopefully it would be a success.

5. AIR QUALITY IN THE BOROUGH

The forum received a presentation from Ned Johnson (Pollution Control and Air Quality - Principal Officer) on air quality in the borough.

1. Presentation

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The following points were highlighted in the presentation:

- The great smog of 1952 eventually led to the high point in Environmental Law the 1956 Clean Air Act.
- Air pollution is major concern. It is one of the world's biggest preventable killers. Everyone is at risk. It can cause heart disease, cancer and respiratory illnesses.
- The major sources of air pollution are road traffic, industry and domestic heating. There are more than 160,000 vehicles a day travelling along the A10 and A406 with 325,000 on the M25.
- One of the major pinch points is outside Bowes Primary School on the A406 where traffic is often at a standstill.
- Industrial emissions and sites such as the incinerator are subject to greater control than traffic under European Union directives.
- Gas domestic heating is a major concern. The way houses are heated will have to change. District heating schemes are very efficient.
- The council monitors PM10 particles and nitrogen dioxide levels. PM10 particles can penetrate the airwaves and go into the bloodstream. Nitrogen dioxide exceeds safe levels on busy roads in Enfield. PM10 does not.
- There are 4 real time monitoring stations in the borough and 10 diffusion sites. The information gained is fed into the borough systems to calibrate modelled outcomes. This can help predict problems.
- Bowes Primary School is at one of the worst pinch points in the borough.
- Pollutants are affected by the weather. Safe PM10 levels are never exceeded and have fallen away recently with the phasing out of diesel fuel in buses and lorries.
- The Council has an Air Quality Action Plan setting out how the borough can reduce nitrogen dioxide and PM10 levels. This was first issued in 2003, updated in 2015 and a new one is now being prepared.
- The latest version contains 40 actions mainly based around traffic and encouraging more walking and cycling. The Council does not control the major roads running through the borough. These are under Transport for London and the Highways Agency. Most pollution comes from main roads.
- It is the significant improvement in vehicle technology, not a reduction in levels of traffic, that have helped reduce PM10 levels in the borough. There are signs that Nitrogen Dioxide levels are also decreasing but not fast enough. The extension of the ULEZ should bring about significant improvement.
- The Mayor of London has funded some major projects including a London wide anti idling project to help change perceptions and make people more aware of the dangers and a non-road mobile machinery project. Compliance has been high and these schemes have worked well.
- Recently there had been a project to create a green wall made of ivy outside Bowes School. This had been successfully in reducing

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nitrogen dioxide emission levels, on the school side of the wall, by 20%.

- The London Bus Low Emission Zone had also been a success. This had involved all buses travelling between Seven Sisters and Edmonton meeting Euro 6 emission level.
- Everyone had a responsibility to reduce emissions.

2. Questions/Comments

- 2.1 Thanks to Ned Johnson for his interesting presentation.
- 2.2 Support for the green wall initiative and anti-idling measures.
- 2.3 Concern that the low traffic neighbourhood schemes were pushing more traffic onto the North Circular.
- 2.4 The suggestion, which had first been made more than 20 years ago, that the North Circular outside Bowes School should be put into a tunnel. This was unlikely to happen in the current economic climate.
- 2.5 Concern about the position of Bowes School and the suggestion that it should be closed if it was unsafe. Assurances that the Council would not allow children to attend if levels of pollution were unsafe.
- 2.6 There was a need for a shift away from car use which would hopefully gradually take place over the next 5-10 years and should lead to improvements in the levels of traffic and pollution, making the North Circular into a very different road.

3. Summing up from the Chair

Thanks to Ned Johnson for his very informative presentation and support for the green wall concept. It would be good if this could be extended. Ned Johnson informed the Chair that an Air Quality Audit was being undertaken and if funds allowed measures like this could be extended.

6. LETTER TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ON PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT

The panel received and noted the letter sent to the Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government on permitted development rights.

NOTED

1. Concern about the challenges and issues raised by the new national legislative framework.

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2. The Enfield Society and the Southgate District Civic Voice had also written to the Secretary of State to express their concern about the proposals.
3. The view that the proposals would undermine town centres and traditional high streets as well as the local authorities ability to control the character of the town centres.
4. The British Property Federation were also against these proposals.
5. Preparation of an Article 4 directive was taking place but nothing could be done until the new permitted development rights were in place.
6. Local authorities were resisting the new proposals which would take powers away from local councils and their ability to control inappropriate development. They would give developers more power and local authorities less.
7. Thanks to the Leader and officers for putting together the letter.
8. The Council would have to wait to see what the Government response would be.

7. MINUTES FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 13 JANUARY 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2021 were received and agreed as a correct record.

8. REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

The Forum noted the revised work programme.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

1. Enfield Town Planning Application

NOTED

1. Concern was expressed that there would not be another opportunity to discuss the Enfield Town Planning Application at a forum meeting.
2. So far there had only been an opportunity to consider the outline, and not the detailed application. This application was worth over £1.5 billion and would have a huge impact on Enfield Town Centre and could set a template for development across the borough.
3. The Chair agreed to take the comments on board and would follow the process established for the referral of planning applications for discussion at Environment Forum meetings.

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4. That there were other means for raising questions about planning applications including questions, queries, deputations and planning panels.
5. Concern that it was more effective to look at and shape applications at an early stage before they were finalised. The forum members had a large amount of expertise which could be used to influence early decision making.
6. The Chair greatly appreciated the informed knowledge and contributions from the forum representatives but regretted that the forum could not be a replacement for the former Conservation Advisory Group (CAG). The former members of CAG could continue to meet up, but the Council no longer had the resources to provide the officer support that they had been able to supply in the past.
7. All comments made on planning applications at forum meetings were minuted and fed back to planning officers who would take them into account when making recommendations on planning applications.
8. The Environment Forum had a broader remit to cover many different kinds of environmental issues.
9. The former CAG members had discussed the possibility of continuing to meet as CAG but felt that without officer input it would not be so effective and that they could have more influence through attending the forum.
10. There was support for the suggestion that Governance should be asked to reconsider and to allow further consideration of the Enfield Town application at the forum.

10. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The forum noted the dates agreed for future meetings:

- Tuesday 30 March 2021
- Wednesday 28 April 2021