

**Item 5- Members Question Time****1. Question submitted by Mr Ernest Mallett**

Can an update on 'Molesey Wetlands' 106 planning conditions be given, particularly in respect of the car park, visitor centre, partial opening to the public and the proposed 25 year Trust Care & Maintenance?

**Reply:**

The site has been restored and the final phase is in its final year of aftercare, expiring at the end of this year. The site is exceeding the nature conservation benefits that it was designed to provide.

The site is owned by Thames Water, and was operated by Island Barn Aggregates (a Joint Venture between Cemex & Lafarge). The site will pass back to Thames Water on cessation of the aftercare to enter the Longer Term Management phase, as set out in the Section 106 Agreement. Thames Water indicated many years ago that they would like a third party conservation body to take on the management of the site, and eventually they settled on Surrey Wildlife Trust, who were/are very keen to take on the site. Indeed, by involving the Wildlife Trust early in the process, the restoration design was amended to meet their requirements, including the provision of an onsite car park, which has been delivered.

However, it has taken a considerable period of time for the terms of the agreement between Thames Water and Surrey Wildlife Trust to be agreed, and indeed they have still yet to be agreed. Strictly speaking this is not directly a planning matter, or something we have jurisdiction or control over, but the County Council's Principal Enhancement Officer has constantly cajoled and pushed for a resolution and that is ongoing.

Regarding the visitor centre, the original plan was that the redundant house in the south west corner of the site would provide an ideal location for that. However, Surrey Wildlife Trust would like to see a purpose built structure at the entrance to the site, acknowledging that this would involve further facilities than that required by the Section 106 and which they would have to fund themselves. The old mess 'hut' has been relocated here as an interim measure.

Regarding opening to the public, the site is designed as a sanctuary nature reserve, where the public look into the site, rather than enter and walk around. This was necessitated as part of the original planning permission, specified by Natural England, which would not otherwise have been granted.

There has been an issue in respect of the opening of the permissive path that was created between the Thames pathway and Hurst Road. Thames Water insisted on this being put in a palisade fenced corridor for security reasons, and the Police have subsequently advised that they have concerns about its safety for users. So it has, to date, never been opened. As this is a requirement of the Section 106 Agreement, rather than the planning permission, the only way we could enforce compliance is

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through the courts and the Minerals Planning Authority have taken the view that it would not be expedient to pursue this.

There is a requirement under both the planning permission (condition 16) and Section 106 Agreement to provide a long term management plan for the site. This is in the process of being finalised and submitted for approval, to be in place for the end of the year, when aftercare formally ceases.

The Principal Enhancement Officer will continue to keep the local Member updated, as he does on a regular basis.



**Mr Tim Hall**

Chairman of the Planning and Regulatory Committee