

23/5/2023

Good Afternoon everyone,

I write as Chair of the Aldborough Hatch Defense Association and in support of Mr Chris Gannaway's letter to you in regard to the future of Nature Conservation in the Borough. Chris has a wealth of experience and was the Borough's representative on the London Wildlife Trust for many years and has been an invaluable resource not only to the Borough but for many volunteer groups.

I believe we need to have a accredited Ecologist for Redbridge, and whilst it is understandable the Council may want a 'do all' person, I believe this is short sighted in terms of what is clearly a rapidly changing and challenging environment.

- It is acknowledged that climate change has and will continue to alter the landscape, much of the land in the Borough has been designated a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and if we want future generations to benefit but to actively protect this, then we need a professional to lead this.
- Planning law is a minefield, and if the Council wish to establish a sound baseline for any challenge, be that from developers or Govt alike, then we need to have a professional to do so. Planning law currently entails a 'Planning Need' for 10% Biodiversity Net Gain and to ensure this is met, the Borough needs a person to argue this as well as any other condition, the Council seeks from a developer.
- Health and well being. The recent pandemic taught everyone the cost of health living, not only physically, but for mental health and certainly that has increased usage of our parks and open spaces, which need to be protected.
- Increased usage is wonderful, but there are downsides, not just an increase in litter, but there needs to be a firm and educational input about leaving species to flourish and not be picked!
- The advice given not only to parks and leisure within the Council, but to outside groups – the previous Ecologist Officer Frances Castro was a great help at St Peter's Church, especially about our trees in the churchyard. As one of the few open churchyards left with many TPO'd specimens, his advice was invaluable and ensured that our own biodiversity was not adversely effected.
- The job specification proposed is for a ranger or two persons, part of whose duties will include advising and liaising with the Borough Rough Sleeper Team. Whilst I can appreciate that rough sleepers may well use our parks and open spaces, once notified, surely this is a matter for the Rough Sleepers Team themselves.
- The new person/s are tasked with overseeing the team. I apologise in advance, but I was unaware there was a team and how many people does this consist of?

The original Environment Strategy was put in place in 1997 and was supposed to be reviewed every 10-15 years, clearly this slippage means a lot of catching up, not only in terms of planning and ensuring the Borough's policies are water-tight, but to ensure that Redbridge continues to be a Green and pleasant, healthy environment for all our residents.

On behalf of the AHDA, I ask that you reconsider and appoint a qualified Ecologist as part of the Redbridge Team, and if financial constraints are a factor, consider 'sharing' that expertise with neighbouring Boroughs.

Many thanks in advance for your time,

Vanessa Cole

Chair of the Aldborough Hatch Defense Association.