

**Agenda Item 11: Report of the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre
Action Group**

**Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee
20 July 2004, 7pm Hendon Town Hall**

Welsh Harp Eco-Park Feasibility Study Now Proceeding

I am pleased to report as Chairman of the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre Action Group that under the auspices of one of our members, Brent Business for the Environment (who are acting as project managers on our behalf), the Centre for Alternative Technology have been commissioned to carry out the Welsh Harp Eco-park Feasibility Study. We have received full funding for the project without recourse to either the London Boroughs of Brent or Barnet. The funding has been made available from the Metropolitan Housing Trust, the Mayor of London, the London Development Agency and English Nature. The project is proceeding with the written agreement of British Waterways Board and the verbal approval of the London Borough of Brent. The Leader of Barnet Council has been informed of the project and we await a response in due course.

There has been concerns about the possibility of setting up Trusts to administer large areas of publicly owned land and these concerns were specifically itemised in reports to the Welsh Harp JCC on the 14th September 1995 and the 20th March 1997. I hope members will be reassured to know that the Scope and Form of Study set down in the Consultancy Agreement between our project managers, the Brent Business for the Environment and the Centre for Alternative Technology (the Consultants) takes these points clearly into account as indicated in this extract from the Consultancy Agreement:

1. *Scope and Form of Study*

1.1. To be as defined in:

- 1.1.1. the Welsh Harp Eco Park Feasibility Study Brief
- 1.1.2. the CAT proposal
- 1.1.3. our letter and attachments of 16.6.2003.

We will require that the Study is lead by Peter Harper.

1.2. Specifically you are reminded that the starting point for the Study is the future of the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre. It is important that we receive innovative but also practical proposals for how this Centre may be rejuvenated. Your attention is drawn to the fact that funding for this centre is now exclusively the responsibility of the London Borough of

Brent. The present acting head of centre is Harry Mackie who you will clearly wish to consult.

- 1.3. You should be aware that the London Boroughs of Brent and Barnet are strongly against the creation of Trusts to operate on the Welsh Harp Public Open Space. It may be possible to suggest a new form of operation suitable for the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre as this operates on a defined area which is not Public Open Space. Even here though you should take into account the absolutely necessary requirement to obtain long term operational funding before any sort of change from current Local Authority funding and responsibility could be proposed.
- 1.4. We have not proposed site boundaries to your study. The current Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre has defined boundaries. The Welsh Harp on the other hand is defined by various boundaries depending upon different uses e.g. the SSSI boundary. The public perception may be that where the mown grass (sports field) and long grass (nature conservation) meet is the boundary. You may extend your vision into the sports fields and parks adjoining the Welsh Harp if you feel there is advantage in better creating a coherent and attractive green resource for Brent and Barnet. In any event you will be concerned with pedestrian and cycle links so you will need to look at the wider area.
- 1.5. In conclusion we are primarily wishing to see a dynamic, forward thinking, innovation set of proposals, which will capture the public's imagination about the potential of the area to transform their relationship with the environment. There is much talk about Bio Diversity, Environmental issues, and Sustainable living, but for the majority people in the local area there is still limited direct experience of nature. The Welsh Harp must offer a fresh insight into the other world beyond the car, home, pub and workplace and fire their imagination about Nature which may ultimately transform their own thinking and lifestyles.

The Centre for Alternative Technology will carry out consultation with local groups and statutory bodies as part of the Feasibility Study. These will include at least:

British Waterways
 The Environment Agency
 English Nature
 Planning and Parks Departments of the London Boroughs of Barnet and Brent
 London Borough of Brent Youth & Community Services
 The Greater London Authority
 Transport for London
 Welsh Harp Conservation Group
 Welsh Harp Sailing Association
 Birchen Grove Residents Association

Greenhouse Garden Centre
Brent Business for the Environment
Brent Energy Network
Roe Green Junior School, Kingsbury
Brent EAZ, John Kelly Boys' Technology College

To this list will also be naturally added the present acting head of the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre – Harry Mackie. If other groups wish to be consulted please forward their names to the our Project Leaders, the Brent Business for the Environment, Ground Floor, Landmore House, 370-386 High Road, Wembley, HA9 6AX, email – bbe1uk@yahoo.co.uk. I personally will not be involved in the Study other than as a consultee, because of a potential conflict of interest due to my part ownership of the Greenhouse Garden Centre and Woodfield Nursery which form part of or are on the edges of the Study.

I hope that the report will be finalised sometime in the New Year and this will no doubt then be circulated to members of the WHJCC. I hope that local authority representatives of the London Boroughs of Brent and Barnet will commend the commissioning of this Study to their appropriate committees and councils. Neither council nor the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre Action Group is bound by any of the proposals set down in the Feasibility Study and there will of course be a need for a wide ranging debate not least with the local authorities but equally with local residents groups and other bodies having an interest in the Welsh Harp once the feasibility study is completed. I do hope however that all parties will see the merits of a study whose aim is to raise the profile of the Welsh Harp and help its long term conservation.

Malcolm Scott
Chairman Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre Action Group

MWGS/CW
13 July 2004