



MINUTES OF THE WELSH HARP JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Wednesday 22 July 2015 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Khatri (LB Barnet) (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Kay (LB Barnet), Langleben (LB Barnet) and Ahmed (LB Brent) and Sam Thomas (Canal and River Trust), Dale Langdale (Hendon Rifle Club), Clive Cohen (London Wildlife Trust), Dianne Murphy (London Wildlife Trust), Julie Johnson (Local Agenda 21), Phil Atkinson (Phoenix Canoe), Brian Turner (Training Ship Broadsword), Roy Beddard (Welsh Harp Conservation Group), John Shepherd (Welsh Harp Sailing Association), Elizabeth and Martin Hall (West Hendon Allotment Society), Judy Shepherd (West Hendon Community Forum) and Geoffrey Johnson (Woolmead Residents' Association)

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillors Hart (LB Barnet) and Mashari (LB Brent) and from Neale Hider (Environment Agency) and Derrick Chung (West Hendon Residents' Association / Friends of York Park)

1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

RESOLVED:

- (i) That Councillor Farah (LB Brent) be appointed as Chair of the committee for 2015/16;
- (ii) That Councillor Khatri (LB Barnet) be appointed as Vice Chair of the committee for 2015/16.

2. Declarations of pecuniary interests

Councillor Langleben advised that he had been appointed as a council nominated representative to the West Hendon Community Trust Fund.

3. Deputations (if any)

None received.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 March 2015 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

5. Matters arising

The Chair clarified that if any matters of importance arose in between the meetings of the committee, the Chair and Vice Chair could be notified and that it would be helpful to do so in good time before the next meeting.

Sam Thomas (Canal and River Trust) explained that an update could be provided before the next meeting on rough sleepers in the Welsh Harp Reservoir.

The committee then discussed and noted the following points with regard to the West Hendon Development:

- It was noted that the outcome of the public enquiry regarding the Compulsory Purchase of the West Hendon Estate was due shortly and further information would be circulated to all members with the minutes of the current meeting.
- A short written update was provided by Terry Garner (Principle Planner, LB Barnet) regarding the position of SSSI Warden. It was commented that this information had been shared at the last meeting of the committee. The London Wildlife Trust (LWT) would be hosting the position and the queries regarding whether any charge would be made by Barratt London for the provision of office space remained outstanding. Dianne Murphy (Chair, LWT Barnet) advised that the job description for the position was due to be signed off imminently; the post would be advertised in the coming weeks with interviews being held in September 2015. It was anticipated that the Warden would be in position in time for the next committee meeting in November.
- Concerns were raised regarding the level of noise from the development and the impact on the birdlife of the Welsh Harp. The committee agreed with the view that the planned measures to inhibit noise were ineffective. It was further noted that the contractors were not complying with the restrictions on working hours as stipulated in the conditions of the planning permission. Roy Beddard (Welsh Harp Conservation Group (WHCG)) noted that there had been no discernable impact on bird populations as recorded by the monthly monitoring surveys conducted by the WHCG. It was agreed that the results of these surveys could be circulated to the committee and the Chair agreed to explore this issue and provide an update to the committee prior to the next meeting.
- Clive Cohen (LWT) raised concerns regarding the impact of the development on water quality and suggested that officers explore funding opportunities to enable regular monitoring to be conducted. A member highlighted that the Environment Agency (EA) did undertake monitoring of water quality. The Chair agreed to seek comment on this matter from the relevant officers.
- The committee reviewed the written update from Nathan Smith (Barratt London) regarding the use of prohibited roads by contractors. Members of the committee reported that the issue was ongoing. The Chair encouraged members of the committee to report any incidents. It was noted that it was not always practical to take down the necessary details to enable accurate reports to be made. Possible solutions were discussed by the committee including the installation of cameras by Barratt London and the continued use of banksmen as it was possible that this acted as a deterrent. It was agreed that the continuation of this problem would be raised by the Chair with the planning officers in Barnet and Barratt Homes. Representatives from Barratt Homes would be asked to attend committee meetings in the future.
- Councillor Langleben raised the issue of the impact of the Brent Cross Regeneration works on the Brent River Stream. The Chair undertook to write to Barnet Planning for an update to be provided at the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That Sam Thomas (Canal and River Trust) provide an update before the next meeting of the committee on rough sleepers in the Welsh Harp Reservoir;
- (iii) That the Vice Chair pursue further information on the outcome of the public enquiry regarding the Compulsory Purchase of the West Hendon Estate and circulate this via Brent Democratic Services;
- (iv) That Roy Beddard (Welsh Harp Conservation Group) circulate via Brent Democratic Services the outcome of the monthly monitoring surveys of bird populations;
- (v) That the Vice Chair seek comment from the relevant officers regarding the possibility of pursuing funding opportunities to enable regular water quality monitoring to be conducted;
- (vi) That the Vice Chair write to Barnet Planning Office for an update regarding the impact of the Brent Cross Regeneration works on the Brent River Stream.

6. **Update - removal of swales**

The committee reviewed the update. Dianne Murphy (Chair, LWT Barnet) advised that she had spoken with Emily Dresner (Natural England) with regard to this matter and had been advised that the swales had been removed without appropriate consultation. The swales formed part of the drainage plan for the site but also the environmental protection plan. The alternative suggestion of an underground tank could not address the impact of the loss of environmental protection caused by the removal of the swales. The Chair agreed to speak to the planning officers in Barnet and to seek an explanation of the process undertaken with respect to this decision and why the relevant authorities were not consulted as required.

RESOLVED:

That the Vice Chair liaise with the planning officers in Barnet to seek an explanation of the process undertaken with respect to the decision to remove the swales and why the relevant authorities were not consulted as required.

7. **Management Plan (Barnet)**

A report was introduced to the committee by Tracy Sawyer (Parks and Open Space Officer, LB Barnet) detailing the on-going site management issues for the Welsh Harp area. Members were informed of the actions being taken to address illegal encampments in the Welsh Harp which included close working between the green spaces team, the safer neighbourhoods team and the police. Noting that the Canal and River Trust had been conducting similar operations, Tracy Sawyer confirmed that she would liaise with the relevant contacts on this matter. Aine Ryan (Strategy and Service Development Officer, LB Brent) highlighted that similar work

was being undertaken by Brent and agreed to provide the contact details for the officer responsible.

Tracy Sawyer drew the committee's attention to the incidences of wildlife crime detailed in the report. Clive Cohen (London Wildlife Trust (LWT)) highlighted that the Signal Crayfish referred to in the report were extremely harmful to native wildlife and action was required to reduce their numbers as recommended by the LWT and the Environment Agency. Following discussion, it was concluded that lobster pots which had been confiscated for evidence in relation to incidents of wildlife crime could not be used for this purpose. Sam Thomas (Canal and River Trust) asserted that this matter would be discussed between the LWT, Natural England and the Canal and River Trust to identify an appropriate way forward.

Tracy Sawyer concluded her presentation by agreeing to amend new signage due to be installed to include notice that fishing was not permitted at the Welsh Harp and to highlight that open water swimming was not permitted and was extremely dangerous due to underwater obstructions / currents.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the report be noted.
- (ii) That officers be recommended to amend the proposed new signage at the Welsh Harp to state that fishing was not permitted and that open water swimming was not permitted and was dangerous due to underwater obstructions / currents.

8. **Management Plan (Brent)**

Aine Ryan (Strategy and Service Development Officer) presented a report updating members on the progress made in relation to the Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan since the last meeting of the committee. She advised that Giant Hogweed had been found in the east of the Welsh Harp Open Space, between the edge of the scrub woodland and mown path. Veolia had been notified and the area fenced off pending removal. Sam Thomas (Canal and River Trust) noted that the Canal and River Trust had also found Giant Hogweed on land for which it was responsible and similar action was underway. Aine Ryan explained that an infestation of the Oak Processionary Moth had also been found at Neasden Recreation Ground and had been treated by the Forestry Commission. It was highlighted that the caterpillar could cause skin irritation and respiratory difficulties for humans. Sam Thomas noted that a catchment area around the infestation would be checked to ensure that the moths had not spread to surrounding trees.

The committee was further informed by Aine Ryan that an Allotments Open Day was scheduled for Saturday 15 August 12pm to 3pm at Birchen Grove Allotment.

In drawing her presentation to a close, Aine Ryan advised the committee that the council had organised a Community Asset Transfer for the letting of the Welsh Harp Education Centre which was currently at the evaluation stage. Further details could be accessed via the council's website. The Committee welcomed this approach.

With reference to the cessation of water sports activities provided by Brent Council, John Sheppard (Welsh Harp Sailing Association) and Phil Atkinson (Phoenix Canoe Club) agreed to explore whether their organisations could address the gap in provision.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

9. **Environment Agency - Verbal Report (if any)**

None

10. **Planning Issues (if any)**

None.

11. **Date of next meeting**

The committee noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 19 November 2015.

12. **Any other urgent business**

In response to concerns expressed by members of the committee, Tracy Sawyer agreed to speak to the team responsible for emptying the bins at the Welsh Harp to ensure that they complied with the current scheduled of three times per week.

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm

Cllr Khatri
Chair