

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>VIRTUAL MEETING</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>WELSH HARP JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE</b></p>		
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>DATE AND TIME</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>THURSDAY 4TH MARCH, 2021</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>AT 7.00 PM</b></p>		

Dear Councillors,

Please find enclosed additional papers relating to the following items for the above mentioned meeting which were not available at the time of collation of the agenda.

Item No	Title of Report	Pages
4.1	PROPOSED WORK UPDATES - SSSI AREA	
8	WELSH HARP WASTE CRISIS UPDATE	3 - 6

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# Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee Report

**Title:** Welsh Harp Waste Crisis Update

AGENDA ITEM 8

**Meeting Date:** 4th March 2021

**Author:** Ben Watt

**Service/ Dept.:** Independent campaigner

**Report to be Presented By:** Ben Watt (local campaigner allied to Friends of the Welsh Harp and Welsh Harp Conservation Group)

## 1. Summary

Lowering of water levels in January 2021 revealed stark extent of not just an 'unsightly litter' issue or waste crisis, but a widescale **environmental crisis**. This is **decades of neglect** threatening a SSSI both **offshore** (long-term plastic pollution, toxic silt, lack of selective dredging strategy, ongoing outfall, unchecked inflowing debris) and **onshore** (no council biodiversity plan, no mapping of invasive and rare plant species, no parks enforcement, tolerance of unlawful angling, tolerance of public tree-felling and greenery destruction, ineffective anti-fly-tipping strategy, lack of woodland, scrub and riverside clean-up schemes, absence of SSSI/Local Nature Reserve public signage and information).

All landowner and statutory bodies - Canal and River Trust, Barnet and Brent Councils and the Environment Agency - caught off guard by the **public outcry** and photo-stories on social media, **mass daily litter-picking** by volunteers, and **critical news reports** on ITV and BBC London. The central environmental crisis - **a broken window culture in a SSSI** - in not being adequately addressed.

## 2. Updates since last WHJCC

N/A

## 3. Impact

- **Equalities and Diversity**

N/A

#### 4. Consultation and Engagement

Friends of the Welsh Harp  
Welsh Harp Conservation Group  
Good Law Project

#### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

CRT must reassess their hastily published Welsh Harp plan of Feb 2021 and (1) accept their responsibility to present a long-term intensive clean-up programme for both offshore and shoreline plastic pollution, (2) refrain from framing and trivialising the crisis as an 'unsightly litter' issue, as if mendable by family day-outs, kindly volunteers and #PlasticsChallenge hashtags, (3) confront, cost and timetable a staged programme of selective dredging around the wetlands for responsible habitat management making use of the experts in the WHCG who built it, and (4) consult with the WHCG and timetable regular breeding raft maintenance on the east and north marshes; all of these in line with their statutory duty.

The EA must (1) make repairs to the broken grill on the Dollis Brook trap and deliver a clear weekly maintenance schedule in line with their duty to keep the trash traps clear (2) consider installing a second trap nearer Brent Cross to alleviate build-up (3) make a full regular clean up of river channels *downstream* of both trash traps especially after heavy rainfall and overflows, and (4) act to mitigate and report on ongoing outfall pollution since the paint factory fire of 2018.

Barnet Council (and Brent Council where relevant) must use S106 windfalls and other funds to (1) deliver a comprehensive implementable biodiversity plan and not just await the upcoming new 'Vision for Welsh Harp' in which many initiatives may well be wishful thinking (2) begin immediate systematic mapping and management of invasive and rare plant species and wildlife (3) employ better methods to deter fly-tipping and begin a major woodland, scrub and riverbank scheme to clear dumped rubbish (4) begin zero tolerance of angling, discarded fishing equipment, public tree-felling and random greenery destruction and (5) create clear SSSI and Local Nature Reserve public information signage at all entrances to encourage best practice from the public.

Natural England currently class Welsh Harp's SSSI status as 'favourable', yet with key bird numbers down and rare plants unmapped, if not enough steps taken by landowners to maintain standards Natural England have the powers to step in and require necessary actions to be taken through a **management notice**. Public authorities also must be mindful of their "Biodiversity Duty".

Further public outrage and action, and even other acts and regulations potentially looming.

## **6. Background papers**

Welsh Harp / Brent Reservoir Management Plan 2016 - <https://www.brent.gov.uk/media/16404048/brent-reservoir-welsh-harp-management-plan-15-03-2016.pdf>

CRT Welsh Harp Reservoir Clean Up, Feb 2021 - <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/where-we-work/london-and-south-east/the-welsh-harp-reservoir-clean-up>

ITV News Report - <https://www.itv.com/news/london/2021-01-26/welsh-harp-reservoir-special-site-for-nature-being-plagued-by-litter>

BBC News Report - <https://www.dropbox.com/s/qxvfizx7cg4z18d/20210221%20BBC%20London%20News%20Brent%20Reservoir%20SMALL.mov?dl=0>

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