



**Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee**  
15 March 2016

**Report from the Director of Regeneration and Environment**

For Action

Wards Affected: ALL

**Welsh Harp Management Plan**

## **1.0 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report presents progress on the Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan since the last meeting of the Committee and during the 2015/16 year to date. The Management Plan is jointly managed by the three main land-holding organisations: Brent Council, the London Borough of Barnet, and the Canal and River Trust.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the Report.
- 2.2 Members are asked to note the revised Welsh Harp / Brent Reservoir Management Plan.

## **3.0 DETAILS**

- 3.1 The current version (dated 13 November 2012) of the Welsh Harp / Brent Reservoir Management Plan is available on the Brent Council website at <https://www.brent.gov.uk/media/3207383/Brent-Reservoir-Management-Plan.pdf>
- 3.1.1. While the Management Plan is a long-term plan and does not require frequent revision, there have been several changes to organisations, management arrangements, and of contact details since 2012. A copy of the Management Plan has been updated to reflect those changes. The text of the management work has received minor editing to improve clarity but the plan is basically that that was approved in 2012. A copy of the draft update is attached to this report.
- 3.2. The Welsh Harp / Brent Reservoir Management Plan includes an Action Plan for the current

year; which for this committee report is updated as Appendix 1. The 'Progress' column summarises current progress.

- 3.3 The transfer process of the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre to Thames 21 was completed in January 2016.
- 3.4 Byelaws: There have been recent changes in the national procedure for the approval of new park byelaws. However, it is still estimated that the byelaws will be implemented by 1 September 2016. .
- 3.5 Life Buoys: Following the reports at the last Committee meeting a replacement life buoy (ring) was installed at Neasden Recreation Ground in December 2015.
- 3.6 Brent Council's draft Physical Activity Strategy has completed the public consultation stage and the Strategy is due to be published by the end of April 2016.
- 3.7 Since 1 April 2015, the new Active Lifestyles Team have had a focus on encouraging physical activity rather than of sports in particular.
  - 3.7.1 The weekly walks programme at the Welsh Harp continues into 2016. Walks generally attract 15-25 people and are led by a walk leader. These take place on Thursdays from 10-11am meeting at Birchen Grove Car Park, Kingsbury NW9. The walks are free of charge.
- 3.8 Crayfish

At the last WHJCC meeting comments were raised regarding Crayfish at the Brent reservoir. The following notes are provided for information. Crayfish are species of crustaceans. There is limited survey information available for the Brent Reservoir, though freshwater rivers in lowland England would be expected to be habitat for the White-clawed Crayfish. Unfortunately, several other species of crayfish have been released into UK waterbodies; and subsequently are at risk of being transferred between waterbodies. The most abundant of these is the North American Signal Crayfish. This competes directly with the White-clawed Crayfish; introduces a carried disease which reduces populations of the White-clawed Crayfish; and causes extensive burrowing into river banks leading to erosion and releasing sediment into rivers. Current control measures include import and legal controls; education of the risks; and guidance on the need to check, clean and dry equipment and watercraft that are being moved from one water body to another. The following link provides a brief summary:

<https://www.buglife.org.uk/sites/default/files/Crayfish%20in%20crisis%20FinalDoc2.pdf>
- 3.9 Kingfisher bank

A suggestion was raised at the last WHJCC meeting for including in the Management Plan the construction of a 'Kingfisher bank' at the Welsh Harp. Kingfisher banks provide an additional structure similar to the riverside banks that Kingfishers use for nesting. Discussion suggests that while desirable, the construction of artificial banks for Kingfishers is not a current priority. Kingfishers do already breed at or near to the Reservoir; and can occasionally be seen along the River Brent. An additional artificial bank would require the design to avoid other existing riverside habitat, be of sufficient strength given the alluvial soils of the reservoir, and would require riparian regulatory approval. There would be construction and maintenance costs. However, Kingfishers are amongst the species that should benefit from enhancements to water quality and habitat in general as part of the Welsh Harp / Brent Reservoir Management Plan. Note also that the River Brent Catchment

Partnership have a project aimed at the removal of timber toe-boarding from lengths of the River Brent. While that work is generally near to the water line and hence lower on the river bank than typical nesting heights, the work would help to restore local river banks to a more natural profile.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan is a long-term document and not all works are feasible in the short-term. Works listed in the management plan include the programmed operational works and longer-term works to maintain, restore and enhance the Welsh Harp area. Works are undertaken only where the budgets or resources are available. Programmed operational works are undertaken only within the existing budgets.
- 4.2 A significant amount of work is undertaken, or in kind, by the voluntary sector, and by the volunteers of the sailing clubs, conservation groups and other community organisations. In addition, the Council and partners, endeavour where feasible, to seek additional funding from grants and other sources.

#### **5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, land owners or occupiers, and also public bodies, are required to give notice to and consult with Natural England where they wish to carry out, or cause or permit to be carried out any operation in an area of land that is of special interest by reason of any of its flora, fauna, or geological or physiographical features (this requirement applies to operations within a site of special scientific interest ('SSSI'), and to operations outside the SSSI that may affect the features of interest); and Natural England will issue consent, issue consent with conditions or refuse consent. Failing to follow this process is a criminal offence which may result in a fine and a restoration order. CROW (and section 28G of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) places a duty on all public bodies to take reasonable steps, consistent with the proper exercise of the authority's functions, to further the conservation and enhancement of the site.
- 5.2 It is good practice for land owners or occupiers to produce Management Plans for the SSSI, which when approved by Natural England, enable the carrying out of the works specified in the Management Plan. This can reduce the administrative work inherent in obtaining consent for individual items of management work.
- 5.3 The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 requires that all public authorities in England and Wales have a general duty to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of their functions.
- 5.4 The owner of land included in a SSSI has a legal duty to inform Natural England within 28 days of any changes in ownership or occupation of the site, including leases, easements and rights.

#### **6 DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.0 The proposals in this report have been subject to screening and officers believe that there are no diversity implications.

## **7 STAFFING / ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS (IF APPROPRIATE)**

7.0 None specific.

## **8.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 The Welsh Harp Management Plan co-ordinates environmental works in the Reservoir area.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Dated correspondence and other documents referred to in the Report include:  
Welsh Harp / Brent Reservoir Management Plan (version 13 November 2012).

## **CONTACT OFFICERS**

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