



Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee
18 July 2017

**Report from the Strategic Director,
Regeneration & Environment**

For Action

Wards Affected: ALL

Welsh Harp Management Plan

Forward Plan Ref: Not applicable.

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 2017/18 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.

3.0 DETAILS

- 3.1 The current version of the Welsh Harp / Brent Reservoir Management Plan (dated 15 March 2016) is available on the Brent Council website at <https://www.brent.gov.uk/media/16404048/brent-reservoir-welsh-harp-management-plan-15-03-2016.pdf>
- 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 sawn logs, reported at the last meeting, and potentially close to the shore line near to Cool Oak Lane bridge, were reported to Barnet Council to investigate.
- 3.4 Rough sleepers: Reports of rough sleepers made during the last meeting and subsequent reports, have been reported by the Council's Parks Services to the outreach team for rough sleepers. The report of a caravan on Birchen Grove was forwarded to the Public Realm team.

- 3.5 Promoting Sport and Physical Activity sessions: The Council are encouraging organisations who organise sport or physical activity to promote their contact details and/or activities on the Open Sessions portal at <https://app.opensessions.io/> This is searchable by the public, so enabling people to locate physical activities by type or in their locality. If needed, help with registration is available from hello@opensessions.io
- 3.6 The weekly walks programme at the Welsh Harp continues. 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. A review of the walks programme has been undertaken and this has included public consultation via the Brent Council website on Healthy Walks and Outdoor Gyms. Options to consider will include a possible reduction in the number of walks offered and the use of volunteers to lead walks. Brent may pilot a walk with a volunteer to see how effective it is before rolling it out across the whole walks programme. It is hoped that there will be a walk on offer at Welsh Harp, in some capacity.
- 3.7 Committee members commented recently on erosion of the bank of the reservoir at Neasden Recreation Ground, near to the south side of the dam wall. The Parks team are suggesting the possibility of a design for a platform, near to the interpretative panels and above the shore. The relationship with land under the responsibility of the Canal & River Trust; and the proximity to the SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) would need to be investigated. This could enable visitors to view while causing less erosion than at present. There would be some form of edge and upstand so as to make the platform wheelchair accessible.

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.

5.0 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, 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. When advice is obtained from Natural England prior to carrying out the works an explanation of how the Council has taken into account any advice Natural England has given should be provided –

The Council must be able to show that it considered alternatives that could reduce the impact on the SSSI –

The Council should demonstrate how the Council has assessed differing interests (including the special interests of the SSSI) in deciding to go ahead with the works.

- 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.

6.0 DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

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

7.0 STAFFING / ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS (IF APPROPRIATE)

- 7.1 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 15 March 2016).

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Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee
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Strategic Director, Regeneration & Environment