

MINUTES OF THE WELSH HARP JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Wednesday, 9 November 2011 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Ashraf (LB Brent) (Chair), Hart (LB Barnet) (Vice-Chair), Khatri (LB Barnet), Mashari (LB Brent) and Rayner (LB Barnet) and Neale Hider (Environment Agency), Molly Savage (Local Agenda 21), Clive Cohen (London Wildlife Trust), Roy Beddard (Welsh Harp Conservation Group), Judy Shepherd (West Hendon Community Forum), Geoffrey Johnson (Woolmead Residents' Association), Brian Turner (Training Ship Broadsword) and Derrick Chung (West Hendon Residents' Association / Friends of York Park)

Apologies were received from: Councillors Johnson (LB Barnet) and Harry Mackie (Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre)

1. Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 19 July 2011 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising (if any)

Bank at former youth sailing base site

Geoff Johnson (Woolmead Residents' Association) advised that the condition of the bank next to the marketing centre had worsened since the date of the last meeting. He added that should anyone wish to contact Barratt Homes direct regarding the issue, he could provide them with the relevant email address. The Chair noted that there was an item on the agenda relating to this issue.

Crop Protection Association (CPA) leaflet regarding insecticides

Clive Cohen (London Wildlife Trust) noted that he had advised at the previous meeting that he had liaised with property services to ensure that a CPA leaflet was distributed to libraries and relevant properties and further to this, had recommended to the CPA that they should pursue a similar strategy with other local authorities. As an update on this issue, Clive Cohen informed the committee that the CPA had approached other councils and been successful in distributing the leaflet in this way.

Treatment of invasive species

Clive Cohen queried of Neale Hider (Environment Agency) what the recommended approach was to the treatment of Japanese Knotweed. Neale Hider advised that there were only two herbicide/insecticide treatments for Japanese Knotweed which could legally be used within the United Kingdom in areas within close proximity to

waterways or bodies of water. Neale Hider advised that he could forward a written response to this issue to the committee. Councillor Rayner (LB Barnet) sought confirmation that Barnet council's approach to treating Japanese Knotweed was in accordance with the advice of the Environment Agency. Neale Hider asserted that it was and explained that local authorities were required to submit an application to carry out such treatments. These applications required that the location and date for these proposed treatments were specified. Both Barnet Council and Brent Council had submitted applications as necessary for works that they wished to complete. Clive Cohen reiterated his concern that the chemicals contained within these treatments contaminated the food chain. He noted that the most likely way for this to occur would be via honey bees and queried whether the treatments took place prior to the flowering season. Neale Hider advised that Himalayan Balsam did not require any treatment but added that as it was one of the richest nectar sources in Europe currently. Japanese Knotweed did require treatment as it both spread vegetatively and could cause damage to buildings and other structures. Giant Hogweed also required treatment as it represented both an environmental issue and a health and safety concern. The Chair thanked Neale Hider for his contribution. The committee was asked to forward any further queries regarding this issue to the Chair at cllr.javaid.ashraf@brent.gov.uk; he would then liaise with Neale Hider to follow these up.

Cool Oak Lane Bridge

Geoff Johnson informed the committee that the issue regarding Cool Oak Lane Bridge was on-going. The committee was reminded that this issue related to the use of Cool Oak Lane Bridge by heavily loaded Lorries seeking to access the site which had previously been occupied by Hendon Nursery. The material being carried by these uncovered Lorries was being distributed during transit in the form of dust over the surrounding area. Geoff Johnson added that the problem was now being addressed by Barnet's Planning department who had issued an enforcement notice to the company using the site. An appeal had been submitted against this notice and was currently being considered by the Planning Inspectorate. The Chair noted that it was suggested at the last meeting of the committee that complaints on this issue should be sent to Barnet Council. The Chair queried of Jenny Warren (Greenspaces Services Manager, LB Barnet) whether she had received any feedback regarding complaints about this issue; Jenny Warren advised that she had not. Geoff Johnson added that there was a weight limit of 7.5 tons for the bridge and there were concerns of the physical damage being caused to the bridge. Judy Shepherd (West Hendon Community Forum) advised that the bridge was of historic value. Neale Hider added that if members of the committee would forward him further details of the materials being transported by the company, he would check these with the relevant team at the Environment Agency. The Chair added that he would liaise with Neale Hider regarding this issue if members wished to email him with any further information regarding this issue. Geoff Johnson added that the dust was detrimental to the health of residents and bird / animal life in the surrounding area and Councillor Julie Johnson had complained about this.

Environmental Impact Survey / Contamination of waterways

It was noted that it had been agreed at the previous meeting that it should be ascertained whether testing of waterways still took place and an update was sought in relation to this. Neale Hider advised that he would address this issue during his verbal report to the committee.

Clive Cohen commented that it was important that the quality of the water was regularly tested to enable any pollution of the waterways, particularly from the Brent Cross Development, to be tracked. Clive Cohen further commented that in previous years there had been a significant pollution issue caused by unmonitored cess pits and faulty household connections in and around Totteridge, Barnet. This was significant for the Welsh Harp area as the waterways in Totteridge flowed into the Welsh Harp. Neale Hider advised that this was an issue for Thames Water to address. Neale Hider further advised that Thames Water had recently conducted an area wide survey of sewers in the Totteridge area, following two incidents which had occurred in this area and which had been reported to them by the Environment Agency. Clive Cohen reiterated that testing needed to be on-going. Neale Hider informed the committee that if they became aware of any pollution incidents they could call the Freephone twenty-four hour emergency hotline number (0800 807060) and these reported incidents would be investigated. If members of the committee had any general queries they could contact the Environment Agency via the general enquiries telephone number (03708 506 506 [Mon-Fri, 8am - 6pm]) or email enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk. It was agreed that a letter would be written to Thames Water to obtain an update on this issue.

4. Membership application

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5. Barratt Homes development

The Chair advised the committee that a representative of Barratt Homes would not be attending the current meeting to discuss the condition of the bank next to the Barratt Homes marketing suite at the site of the former youth sailing base. Jenny Warren (Greenspaces Services Manager – LB Barnet) explained that there were two different contacts for Barratt Homes each with different areas of responsibility. If members wished to raise specific questions in advance of a meeting these could be forwarded to the relevant person. The Chair noted that it had been agreed at the last meeting of the committee that any questions members had regarding this issue would be forwarded to him by email; however, he had received no communications on this subject. The secretary to the committee added that at present Barratt homes had indicated that they were unable to answer any specific queries as they were in the process of renegotiating with the Planning department in Barnet regarding the area; however, they hoped to attend the next meeting of the committee in the New Year at which time further details regarding the new arrangements could be provided.

RESOLVED: -

- i. that queries regarding the bank next to the Barratt Homes marketing suite at the former youth sailing base site be emailed to the Chair at javid.ashraf@brent.gov.uk
- ii. that Barratt Homes be invited to attend the next meeting of the committee scheduled for January 2012.

6. Environment Agency - verbal report

Neil Hider (Environment Agency) advised that his colleague had requested this agenda item but was not able to bring the report to the committee as he had hoped. Consequently, this item would be presented to the committee at its next meeting.

Water quality – waterways and bodies of water in the Welsh Harp area.

Neil Hider advised the committee that he had liaised with the water quality team at the environment agency who had informed him that there had been no water sampling carried out within the Welsh Harp for the last 20 years. However, regular water quality tests had been conducted from silt within the Brent catchment up until 2006. This process had now been usurped by the European Union Water Framework Directive. The aim of this directive was to improve the water courses

across Europe by 2015 and the environment agency would be working with partner agencies to achieve this.

The Environment Agency had continued to carry out sampling on waterways which flowed in to the Welsh Harp. Information regarding the results of this testing was publically available. It was agreed that this information could be circulated to members of the committee.

It was intended that automated water quality monitoring points would be established in the Brent catchment. Neil Hider explained that there was not sufficient manpower to carry out regular testing of a high number of waterways and testing was usually carried out for specific purposes only such as to test for Blue-Green Algae . Further details regarding these automated monitoring points could be provided at the next meeting of the committee.

The Chair requested that it would be useful to have a report on what tests had been carried out to-date at the next meeting of the committee.

A member of the committee noted that testing had been carried out for killer shrimp and queried what the results of this were. Neale Hider advised that these tests were currently on going.

RESOLVED: -

- i. that the verbal report be noted
- ii. that an update on where and what tests had been conducted regarding the water quality of waterways and bodies within and affecting the Welsh Harp area be provided to the committee.

7. Management Plan (Barnet)

Jenny Warren (Greenspaces Services Manager – LB Barnet) presented a report to the committee updating members on the position of the Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and on-going site management.

The committee was advised by Jenny Warren that there had been a recent issue regarding rough sleepers on the Barnet side of the LNR. This issue had been referred to the safer neighbourhood team and the individuals in question had been referred to Barnet's in-house **priority intervention team**.

Turning to the subject of the West Hendon Regeneration, Jenny Warren advised that a Masterplan Review process had been initiated to address funding related viability issues. As part of this process, Barratt Metropolitan LLP would be required to submit a new planning application. Statutory consultations with organisations such as Transport for London (TfL), Natural England and British Waterways, would take place during the early stages of this process. A wider pre-planning application consultation would be held following this. With regard to the condition of the bank at the temporary sales centre, planting would be carried out in November 2011 in accordance with the scheme set out at Appendix 2 to the report. This planting scheme aimed to improve the environmental value of the edge of the Welsh Harp

and would benefit waterfowl, the presence of which was important for the SSSI designation of the area. It was also a condition of existing Outline approval that an eight meter wide buffer strip was completed upon the cessation of the use of the site. The planting scheme set out the intention to provide a mature element to the vegetation forming this buffer strip.

Jenny Warren informed the committee that the Welsh Harp area had benefited from the improvement project being implemented regarding the Dollis Valley Greenwalk. The Dollis Valley Greenwalk had been successful in obtaining £400k from the Mayor's Help a London Park scheme and further funds amounting to £280k from Walk London and TfL. Under this project the Welsh Harp area had benefited through the eradication of invasive species and the improvement of water quality through the selective reduction of vegetation along the corridor. In addition, the improvement of signage along the corridor identified a walking route which included the Welsh Harp and further to this, identified the site itself as a location to visit.

During the committee's discussion several issues were raised. The Chair queried when the West Hendon Project was scheduled to be completed. Jenny Warren advised that the deadline for completion was twenty years hence.

RESOLVED: -

That the report be noted.

8. Management Plan (Brent)

Leslie Williams presented a report to the committee setting out the progress on the Brent Reservoir / Welsh Plan Management Plan. The Committee was advised that a new version of the map detailing the different zones for the Welsh Harp had been devised and circulated to committee members.

The report updated the committee on several issues raised at the previous meeting. With regard to the issue of water pollution through misconnections, it was expected that most misconnections would remain on private land upstream of the water company's direct responsibility. Turning to the subject of the treatment of Japanese knotweed, it was highlighted that the most recent advice from British Waterways, regulatory agencies and the Environment Agency was that those agencies would not approve the foliar (spray) application of herbicide within a site of special scientific interest (SSSI). Treatment by Stem Injection had been used by Barnet council in recent years and would be used within and near to the SSSI at Neasden Recreation Ground by Brent Council in partnership with the Environment Agency and the Welsh Harp Conservation Group.

Neale Hider advised that the Environment Agency had provided funds of £5k which had been put towards tree maintenance works in Barnet. And maintenance work for Neasden Recreation Ground. Roy Beddard advised that the tree maintenance works would start the following week and would be complete within two weeks. A key aim of the work was to protect and create favourable conditions for the underlying reed beds to prosper/expand. Reed beds were a priority habitat both locally and nationally. The tree maintenance works were conducted on a four/five

year cycle and were carried out by contractors due to the highly skilled nature of the work.

During the subsequent discussion, the committee raised a number of issues. Councillor Rayner suggested that funding opportunities via the Mayor of London should be explored. The Chair advised that the independent charity, 'Trees for Cities' worked with local communities on tree planting projects in urban areas and might be able to assist with the tree maintenance works that were co-ordinated by the Welsh Harp Conservation Group.

The Chair queried what determined the boundaries of the zones set out on the map of the Welsh Harp and was advised that the zones echoed those established by the committee previously. Roy Beddard advised that initially the zones demarked different habitat areas and were established to facilitate the management plan; however these boundaries were no longer relevant. It was commented that the zones should reflect the type of management activity that was carried out in the area. Leslie Williams noted that he would feed these comments back.

RESOLVED: -

that the report be noted.

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

There were no Planning Issues.

10. **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was scheduled for 10 January 2012.

11. **Any Other Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm

J ASHRAF
Chair