

MINUTES OF THE WELSH HARP JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 10 January 2012 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Ashraf (LB Brent) (Chair), Councillor Hart (LB Barnet) (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Johnson (LB Barnet), Khatri (LB Barnet), Rayner (LB Barnet) and Mashari (LB Brent) and Clive Cohen (London Wildlife Trust), Roy Beddard (Welsh Harp Conservation Group), Harry Mackie (Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre), Julia Touloumbadjian (Welsh Harp Sailing Association), Derrick Chung (West Hendon Residents Association/ Friends of York Park) and Geoffrey Johnson (Woolmead Residents' Association)

Apologies were received from: Councillors and Neale Hider (Environment Agency), Neil Winter (Environment Agency), Molly Savage (Local Agenda 21), Dr Leo Batten (Welsh Harp Conservation Group), Judy Shepherd (West Hendon Community Forum) and Brian Turner (Training Ship Broadsword).

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 9 November 2011 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising

Testing of waterways.

Clive Cohen enquired as to whether the testing of water in the Welsh Harp by the Environment Agency had taken place. The Chair informed the Committee that apologies for absence had been received from the representatives of the Environment Agency but had submitted a summary of their test findings. This set out the statuses for ammonia and dissolved oxygen at routine sample points on the Brent and tributaries based on samples taken between July and August 2011.

Councillor Rayner asked whether officers had explored funding opportunities from the Mayor of London. Officers undertook to cover this under the general heading of Management Plan.

4. Thames 21 presentation

Vicky D'Souza, British Waterways Community Engagement Coordinator, gave a slide presentation on how Thames 21 were connecting people to Brent's waterways. She drew attention to the areas of North West London within Brent where Thames 21 worked (Grand Union Canal, River Brent and River Crane). These included Hillside and Gibbons Recreation Grounds, Tokyngton Recreational Ground, Neasden Recreational grounds and the Welsh Harp. Thames 21 were engaged in various activities focussing on litter clean up sessions along rivers, graffiti removal, school and educational events, management, improvement and restoration of habitat, invasive plant control, family fun days and walks along the waterways. Vicky D'Souza continued that Thames 21 continued to support volunteer organisations, taking lead and giving instructions, providing equipment, health and safety advice and insurance cover.

Looking to the future, Vicky D'Souza stated that Thames 21 were constantly looking for ways to further promote the local waterways and how to involve people. In conclusion she expressed a hope to strengthen links with local councils and other organisations in the Brent and Barnet catchment areas, working together to achieve common objectives. For further information, she asked members to contact her on 07827 852599 or email vickyDsouza@thames21.org.uk

In welcoming the presentation members requested Thames 21 to look into the possibility of collecting left over shopping trolleys around the river bank.

5. Barratt Homes - Welsh Harp

Messrs Tom Brosnan, Warren Reid and Ned Baker, representatives of Barratt Metropolitan Homes attended the meeting at the request of the Committee for this item. Tom Brosnan gave an update on issuers relating to the initial and future phases of the development on Welsh Harp and their relationship with the SSSI. He started his presentation by drawing members' attention to the state of the sales and marketing area prior to and after the development. Within the initial phase, 194 dwelling units were to be delivered of which 151 would be private and 43 would be for affordable housing and were scheduled for completion by December 2012 and built to Code Level 3 standard. He continued that ecological documentation and surveys had been provided to the London Borough of Barnet showing how Barratt Homes respected their surroundings including bird and bat boxes on flats. In addition Barratt Homes would provide a financial contribution of £148,648 for Welsh Harp reservoir improvements under the Section 106 legal agreement.

Mr Warren Reid provided further clarifications that drainage improvements would be carried out in accordance with requirements and standards of the Environment Agency and that all flat roofs would have green roof. In keeping with the green theme, RPS Ecology advising on ecological significance had recommended the planting of memorial trees. He continued that as the remainder of the scheme was not financially viable, an options review report on the development was submitted to Barnet Council for review by its officers and to be considered by its Executive by the end of January 2012. Mr Reid confirmed that Barratt Homes had had a meeting with British Waterways and Natural England on how to improve the estate's relationship with the Welsh Harp reservoir. He advised members that Barratt were

still aiming for a total number of units of 2,171 with each phase having its own ecological survey undertaken and a robust testing via Environmental Impact Assessment.

In respect of specific questions raised at the last meeting, Mr Brosnan submitted the following answers:

No. of units in phase 1	197
Anticipated completion	December 2012
Management plan was in place to control vehicular pollution and congestion.	
Barratt Homes would continue to use sustainable materials in the construction.	
Barratt Homes would continue to invest and support the Welsh Harp SSSI.	

In welcoming the presentation, Councillor Johnson commended Barratt Homes in the way they had managed the site to date. Councillor Rayner requested that copies of the slides be circulated to all representatives with the minutes of this meeting. He was however concerned that the issue regarding cost savings, financial viability and a review of the scheme could jeopardise the 'green aspirations' of the development. Councillor Hart suggested the use of green walls to soften up the development and make it visually attractive.

Councillor Mashari asked about the start date of the agreement between Barratt Homes, British Waterways and the Environment Agency, what progress there had been on the use of the Section 106 funds and whether the ecological report from RPS could be made available to all representatives. In responding to the above, Mr Brosnan confirmed that the agreement between Barratt Homes, British Waterways and Environment Agency had been in existence since the inception of the scheme and that digital copies of the ecological report would be made available as requested. He added that the pontoons were removed for health and safety reasons to be replaced with flourishing water side planting. He continued that the section 106 legal agreement which was under the control of Barnet Council listed the works and the benefits including the contribution to the Ranger service.

Councillor Johnson enquired as to whether the bank was to be re-shaped and an idea as to when planting along the bank would take place. Clive Cohen also reiterated the request for copies of the ecological and bat surveys to be sent to all representatives and an audited account of the section 106 funds. In order to reduce light pollution to birds, he suggested the use of a specialist glass which would not be attractive for birds to fly into.

In response, Mr Brosnan of Barratt Homes stated that planting along the bank side would commence within the week and that the bank had been profiled with a machine up to Cool Oak Lane to ensure its diversity. He undertook to liaise with the Chair to arrange members' site visit. He continued that bat surveys had been carried out by RPS and although trees that were felled were carried out in a proper manner, memorial trees would be maintained to improve the ecology of the scheme. In respect of light pollution he advised the Committee that specialist light fittings as suggested would be considered. He undertook to obtain a breakdown of expenditure of the Section 106 funds and details of community group involvement from Barnet Council which was in control of the funds.

In bringing the discussion to a close, the Chair requested that Barratt Homes attend the next committee meeting for an update as a lot of questions had been asked but the discussions had had to be curtailed due to time restraints.

6. Management Plan (Brent)

The Committee received a progress report on the Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan, a document which was jointly managed by the three main local land-holding organisations: Brent Council, British Waterways, and the London Borough of Barnet. Leslie Williams, Strategy and Service Development Officer Brent Sports and Parks Service, in his introduction referred to the suggestion at the last meeting that the mapped zones of the Management Plan be updated to better reflect the current management needs of the area. He advised that it would be feasible and consequently the Management Plan document as attached to his report could be revised into a more useable format.

He updated the Committee that information on the habitats of the Brent and Barnet Reservoir was available in the Brent Biodiversity Action Plan on the Biodiversity Action Reporting System website, an online system for national reporting of Biodiversity Action Plans: <http://ukbars.defra.gov.uk/>. He also advised that maintenance of the Heritage Lottery Fund award project was continuing.

Clive Cohen asked officers to clarify when the management plan was last revised adding that he understood the plan was to be revised every five years. Leslie Williams clarified that there was no definitive time scale within which the plan was to be revised but in accordance with the Committee's instructions, the plan was being revised annually, albeit behind schedule. Jenny Warren, Greenspaces Services Manager, Barnet, endorsed the view expressed by Leslie Williams adding that it was a common practice for officers to meet with Roy Beddard of Welsh Harp Conservation Area to review the management plan annually.

RESOLVED:-

that the progress report on the management plan be noted.

7. Management Plan (Barnet) - Verbal update

Jenny Warren, Greenspaces Manager, Barnet in her verbal report to the Committee stated that there were no works to report on. She advised signage mapping for the Dollis Valley site had not been completed and that a meeting between Brent and Barnet was being arranged to explore options on signage.

Julia Touloumbadjian's request for an opportunity for other groups particularly Welsh Harp Sailing Association to input into the discussion was accepted.

Councillor Rayner suggested diamond jubilee planting to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in addition to the plans for the Welsh Harp for the forthcoming Olympics Games. He also suggested that advice be sought from arboricultural officers of both Local Authorities on the type and nature of the trees and that funding opportunities be explored via Trees for Cities and the office of the Mayor of London. It was agreed that any further suggestions be emailed to Jenny Warren.

8. **Environment Agency - Verbal Report**

The Committee noted that representatives of the Environment agency had given apologies for absence and submitted copies of their findings on water testing based on samples taken between July and August 2011. In noting the findings, members emphasised that the following requests be put to the Environment Agency:

- a) Request for more information on the water testing.
- b) Request for clarity
- c) Request for regular testing
- d) EA and Thames Water to decide who was responsible for the testing.

9. **Planning Issues**

Cool Oak Lane

Geoffrey Johnson informed the Committee that the planning breach involving the unauthorised change of use of the land to the mixing/manufacture of soil including the industrial grading of reclaimed building material and soil with storage and deliveries of the same at Woodfield Nursery, Cool Oak Lane, London, NW9 7NB in West Hendon was still continuing. He continued that the operator had demonstrated a flagrant disregard for planning laws with deliveries at all times, constant noise, pollution and mud from the delivery trucks to local roads.

Tom Wyld of Barnet Planning Services advised the Committee that Barnet Council had served an enforcement notice on the premises for unauthorised use back in September 2011. Further to that the operator lodged an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate which was yet to be determined. He undertook to update the Committee again when the appeal had been decided by the Planning Inspector and as requested, ensure that a copy of the decision notice was attached to the minutes.

Barratt Homes

Members were informed that as some of the blocks would be 19-storey in height, it would have serious implications for health and safety adding that at a recent fire incident, water hoses being used by the fire service were effective up to the fifth floor.

Representatives from Barratt Homes clarified that not all of the blocks would be 19-storey in height and that the height and density of the development had been outlined in the master plan.

10. **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting was scheduled to take place on 21 March 2012 at 7:30pm at Brent Town Hall.

11. **Any Other Urgent Business**

Site Visits

In respect of the proposed site visit to the Barratt Homes development the representatives of Barratt Homes were requested to e-mail and liaise with the Chair on the arrangements for the site visits including dates and times. The Chair would then let Democratic Services know to confirm attendance with members of the Committee.

The meeting closed at 9.40 pm

J ASHRAF
Chair