

MINUTES OF THE WELSH HARP JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Wednesday, 7th December 2005 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Harrod (Chair, London Borough of Brent) and Councillor Fox (London Borough of Brent) and Councillor Slocombe (London Borough of Barnet), John Colmans (London Wildlife Trust, Welsh Harp Conservation Group), Frank Hewlett (Barnet Council for Sport and Recreation), Dorothy Jakes (Birchen Grove Residents' Association), Geoffrey Johnson (Woolmead Residents' Association), Julie Johnson (Local Agenda 21), Malcolm Scott (Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre Action Group), Judy Shepherd (West Hendon Community Forum) and Brian Turgoose (Welsh Harp Sailing Association).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ghosh and Sodha (London Borough of Barnet), Councillor McGovern (London Borough of Brent), Roy Beddard (Welsh Harp Conservation Group), Mike Manuel (British Waterways) and Haydn Matthews (Welsh Harp Youth Sailing Base).

Also in attendance were Councillor Farrell (London Borough of Brent), Leslie Williams (Brent Parks Service), Mark Evison (Barnet Parks Service), Roger Jones (LB Barnet), Peter Walker (British Waterways) Leela O'Dea (British Waterways) and Clive Cohen (London Wildlife Trust, Barnet Branch)

1. Declarations of Interests

There were none declared.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 6th September 2005

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 6th September 2005 be received and approved as an accurate record with the additional note that Judy Shepherd be marked as present and that Jeff Johnson sent his apologies.

3. Matters Arising

Welsh Harp Eco Park

It was noted that despite a request by the Committee at the last meeting, it had not been possible to arrange a repeat of the recent Eco Park feasibility study presentation that took place at City Hall, for members of this Committee, due to the lack of funds to pay for the costs involved.

The Chair reported that he felt his own request to the Eco Park project team had been ignored and he expressed concern that the Committee were being sidelined on this project. In advance of the meeting, the Vice-Chair also requested that her similar concerns were noted as she also felt that the Committee and many Councillors were being ignored. During discussion several other members expressed similar views.

Malcolm Scott spoke on behalf of the Eco Park project and explained that the funding structure for the feasibility study had been complicated by the fact that

neither council provided funds. It was explained that the original presentation had been directed at those who had provided funding and that the group would have been willing to provide a repeat if funds had been available but that all moneys had now been spent. Neither council were able to provide funds for a presentation to the Committee.

During discussion it was also noted that many members would welcome a new improved education centre at Welsh Harp which was something they hoped these proposals would provide but that without proper consultation with the Committee and local people, the proposals could be unworkable.

It was noted that this item was also due to be report on in Item 5 (Welsh Harp Management Plan (Brent)) and so Officers were asked to provide the relevant section of that report now. They reported that there had been developments since the previous Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee (WHJCC) meeting and that the Council were now involved in forming the Welsh Harp Project Group to discuss the proposals contained in the recent study and to look at any feasible options and funding streams. The first meeting was due to be held in the near future and that the only delays to arranging this meeting were due to the difficulty in getting a large number of organisations together. It was noted that both councils were likely to be involved in this group.

The Chair and other Members noted this but expressed concern that many WHJCC Members were not on that panel and so requested that WHJCC be consulted regularly on any proposals and in light of these discussions, and relating to Item 5 below, the following resolution was proposed and carried:

RESOLVED:-

that it be reported to the Executive of Brent Council and the Cabinet of Barnet Council that this Committee contends that in the dealings with the Eco Park Feasibility Study that this Committee was not properly consulted and it requests the Executive/Cabinet to instruct Officers to ensure that the Welsh Harp Project Group, and any future project groups, consult fully with the Committee, especially in light of the unique environmental worth of the Welsh Harp reservoir as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), to North-West London.

Raves

Several Members expressed concern that significant damage had been caused by a number of raves and attempted raves over the past few months. Officers were requested to provide a report to the next meeting outlining any damage caused along with recovery and repair work and suggested works to help reduce problems in the future. In particular it was suggested that work to prevent vehicle access to certain areas could be investigated.

4. Public Speaking Arrangements

There were none.

5. Welsh Harp Reservoir Management Plan (Brent)

The Consultative Committee received a report updating them on progress on the Welsh Harp Reservoir Management Plan and related issues.

It was reported that revisions to the plan were currently being examined but that no major changes were planned and it was also reported that officers were looking at ways to improve cross-boundary working for officers from Brent, Barnet and British Waterways to increase co-operative work as far as possible.

In respect of the issues of potential raves and other potential nuisances that although the Council's wardens service only generally works during the day, a 24 hour call-out service was also available to help during non-office hours.

It was explained that derelict Neasden pavilion had been demolished but only after asbestos and bat surveys had been completed and no evidence of bat use had been found. It was noted that demolition did not preclude the use of the site in the future if a suitable proposal was forthcoming.

On the subject of the Local Nature Reserve it was reported that it was hoped to arrange a launch event in the spring of 2006.

During discussion questions were asked regarding the hours that the park wardens work and about concerns that damage was being caused to the tadpole ponds. Officers responded that although the standard operating hours of the wardens were during the day, they did look to alter them in specific circumstances. In the long-term the Parks Service hopes to expand the coverage of the Warden Service. Officers agreed to check for problems near the tadpole pond and to investigate additional signage here to discourage problems.

In the discussion it was also noted that the new Local Nature Reserve status of the Welsh Harp reserve could allow for extra opportunities to raise money for improvement works and Officers indicated they would be pursuing opportunities as they arose.

RESOLVED:-

that the report and the demolition of the derelict pavilion at Neasden Recreation Ground be noted.

6. Welsh Harp Reservoir Management Plan (Barnet)

The Consultative Committee received a report updating them on progress on the Welsh Harp Reservoir Management Plan and related issues.

Officers reported on a number of issues, including a volunteer day by Asda staff to clear up rubbish and vegetation near Woolmead Avenue, the continuation of tree management works around the reservoir, plans to repair the bird hide that had recently been vandalised and progress on installing bollards to help prevent unauthorised vehicles from gaining access to the site.

During discussion questions were asked about plans to relaunch the Youth Sailing base, the work to remove illegal garden extensions and the number of trees on the site. Officers responded that the largest illegal garden extensions had now been dealt with but that there were a few smaller ones to go, it was also explained that there were no current plans to introduce more trees to the site as it was felt that the current balance was about right. It was also noted that new trees 'spoil' the wind for sailing on the reservoir so that needed to be taken into consideration when planning tree planting. Officers promised to report back on the Youth Sailing Base at the next meeting.

RESOLVED:-

that the report be noted.

7. West Hendon Regeneration

A short written update was provided by the Metropolitan Housing Partnership regarding the West Hendon Regeneration Scheme.

The update reported that negotiations were being finalised on the Principal Development Agreement (PDA) and that the Barnet's Cabinet had met in August and approved the PDA in principle and that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had also considered the report.

It was noted that Metropolitan Housing Partnership were in the process of acquiring properties for the scheme and that the Council were expected to consider the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders in February 2006.

It was explained that a full report would be presented to the March 2006 meeting of the WHJCC.

8. Planning Issues

There were none and the Committee expressed concern that planning issues that should be sent to the Committee were not as there never appeared to be any reported at the meetings.

9. Date of Next Meeting

RESOLVED:-

that the next meeting of the Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee has been scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 7th March 2006.

10. Any Other Urgent Business

British Waterways – Big Lottery Fund

It was reported that British Waterways were in the early stages of a bid to the Big Lottery Fund and that they hoped to be successful in a bid of between

£300,000 and £500,000 towards access improvements to the site. If the money was forthcoming it was hoped that the WHJCC would be consulted as to the best uses for the money.

Noise Control

An item was introduced highlighting the issue of noise control at the reservoir, specifically in relation to the Hendon Gun Club and the proposed Eco Park.

It was noted that high levels of noise could deter birds from nesting at the reservoir and could affect the quality of the reservoir site.

It was requested that officers supply a report to a future meeting of the Committee and it was also suggested that the Gun Club be invited to a meeting to enable a fuller discussion of the issues.

Update on Engineering Works on the Dam

A presentation was provided giving an update on the works to improve the dam at the Welsh Harp Reservoir. Peter Walker from British Waterways reported on the progress since the last update and this included the work to raise the level of the dam to enable it to cope with floods up to a 1 in 10,000 year flood level. Other areas of work included improving the earth walls around the dam and providing a bund within Neasden Recreation Ground to help contain excess water during floods and also slope protection works.

It was reported that British Waterways hoped to have finished their works by the end of January 2006.

During discussion of the item it was noted that although there were information boards displayed at the site, a few more could be helpful. Members and Councillors expressed their thanks to British Waterways for the way they had kept the Committee and local residents well informed during the works.

Safe Working on British Waterways Land

Members were informed that British Waterways, as owners of some of the land around the Welsh Harp reservoir, required that all people working on that land complied with the minimum standards on health and safety and that anyone wishing to work on that land should contact British Waterways for more information and training sessions.

Staff Awards

It was reported that the Parks Service had received the team of the year 2005 award at the recent Brent Council staff awards ceremony.

The meeting ended at 9.16 pm

R HARROD
Chair

Mins0506/otherbods&panels/whjcc/whj07dk