

AGENDA ITEM:

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Meeting	Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee (WHJCC)
Date	7 March 2006
Subject	Welsh Harp Management Plan
Report of	Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport
Summary	To report the position on the Local Nature Reserve (LNR) declaration and site management

Officer Contributors	Interim Head of Environmental Services
Status (public or exempt)	Public
Wards affected	West Hendon
Enclosures	None
For decision by	Joint Committee
Function of	Executive
Reason for urgency / exemption from call-in (if appropriate)	N/A

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1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Joint Committee note the report .

2. RELEVANT PREVIOUS DECISIONS

- 2.1 9 March 1998, Recreation, Leisure and Arts Committee, resolved to recommend to Council that Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) be declared at the Welsh Harp, Big Wood and Totteridge Fields Nature Reserves. However, the Chief Executive's supplementary report to Council on 21 April 1998 stated amongst others that the Council should not approve the draft byelaws for the Welsh Harp LNR, and that they must be amended as necessary and resubmitted to Committee.
- 2.2 Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee on 9 December 2003 - approved the proposed boundary of the LNR.
- 2.3 Hendon Area Environment Sub-Committee on 15 March 2005 agreed the designation of a Local Nature Reserve on the Welsh Harp.
- 2.4 Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee of 15 June 2005 agreed draft byelaws.

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The ongoing management of the Welsh Harp contributes towards a Cleaner, Greener Borough.
- 3.2 The work also helps deliver the Corporate Plan priority: 'Protecting Barnet's greenspaces'.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 4.1 None in the context of this report.

5. FINANCIAL, STAFFING, ICT AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None.

6. LEGAL ISSUES

- 6.1 The Local Authority has a statutory duty under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to safeguard, protect and enhance sites of special scientific interest. The Local Authority has the power under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to acquire, declare and manage nature reserves. However, English Nature must be consulted by the Authority in the use of the powers given by section 21. The 1949 Act states that a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) must be managed in such a way to ensure that use of the site does not result in any damage to its natural features.

7. CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS

- 7.1 The terms of reference of the Joint Committee, as set out in its Constitution, include :
“to consider and co-ordinate all the interests of recreation/leisure/maintenance/nature conservation and statutory requirements of the British Waterways Board and the Environment Agency at the Welsh Harp; with the object of protecting the Welsh Harp and surrounding open land as a unique environment for both recreation and wildlife conservation.”

8. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Hendon Rifle Club

- 8.1 Barnet Group Wildlife Trust contacted the Council regarding the noise level associated with the Gun Club on the Welsh Harp in October 2005. The matter was investigated by the Property Section as the gun club lease the site from the Council. The correspondence revealed that they were firing “.38 guns” at the weekend (which have previously been sound-tested and certified), but not shotguns.
- 8.2 Discussion revealed that both English Nature and the Welsh Harp Conservation Group were both happy with the existing arrangements so no further action was taken at the time.
- 8.3 The matter was raised again at the December 2005 Joint Consultative Committee and the Chairman asked that the matter be investigated and reported at the next Joint Consultative Committee (JCC).
- 8.4 The Rifle Club reported that since the discussion in 2005 that black powder shooting no longer takes place on Sundays as this was the day of the week subject of the original complaint. It will also take place earlier in the year. The Club is aware of the importance of the bird life on the reservoir and they provide bird-feeding stations through the winter months.
- 8.5 English Nature were consulted and the opinion is that there is no hard evidence that the rifle club is causing disturbance to the wildfowl. The feedback from the Welsh Harp Conservation Group and RSPB is that there is no evidence of a significant effect and no further action is required at this time.

Local Nature Reserve and Bye-laws

- 8.6 The draft byelaws agreed at the Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee of 15 June 2005 have been submitted to the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) for informal approval. Acknowledgement has been received and a reply is awaited. Once informal approval is given the byelaws will go before the Hendon Area Environment Sub-Committee for referral to the Council in order that application may be made to the Minister for the Environment to sanction them.
- 8.7 The launch event for the Local Nature Reserve is being considered for Spring 2006. Details are still being discussed at the time of writing.

Security Improvements

- 8.8 Installation of extra bollards around the car park at Woodfield Park is due before the spring.

9. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 The Welsh Harp Management Plan can be found on Brent Council's website: www.brent.gov.uk/parks find the plan in the biodiversity section.