

DECISIONS OF THE WELSH HARP JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

31 October 2006

*Councillor Christopher Harris (Barnet) (Chairman)
*Councillor Mary Farrell (Vice-Chairman) (Brent)

Councillors:

Mark Cummins (Brent)
*John Hart (Barnet)
*Julie Johnson (Barnet)
*Will Motley (Brent)
*Hugh Rayner (Barnet)
James O'Sullivan (Brent)

Organisation

Barnet Council for Sport and Recreation
Birchen Grove Residents' Association
Brent Sports Council
British Waterways
English Nature
Environment Agency
Hendon Rifle Club
Local Agenda 21
London Wildlife Trust
London Wildlife Trust
Old St Andrew's Residents' Association
Princes Park Youth Football Club
Strategy Directorate of Greater London Assembly
Training Ship Broadsword
Welsh Harp Conservation Group
Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre
Welsh Harp Sailing Association
Welsh Harp Youth Sailing Base
West Hendon Community Forum
Woolmead Residents' Association

Representative

* Frank Hewlett
Dorothy Jakes
David Carter
Vacancy
Alex Machin
Martin Everett
* Peter Castle
* Elizabeth Fitzgerald
* Clive Cohen
* John Colmans
John Thompson
Jon Bell
Mike Waite
Commander G F Beck
* Roy Beddard
Harry Mackie
* Brian Turgoose
Vacancy
* Judy Shepherd
* Geoffrey Johnson

*denotes Member present

Also in attendance were

Robin Bloom – Barnet Law and Probity
Mark Evison – Barnet Greenspaces Service
Jonathan Regal – Barnet Democratic Services
Leslie Williams – Brent Parks Service

1. OBITUARY FOR THE LATE MIKE MANUEL (BRITISH WATERWAYS)

With the agreement of the Chairman an obituary for the late Mike Manuel (British Waterways), a longstanding member, was read by Leslie Williams.

2. MINUTES (Item 1)

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 July 2006 be approved as a true and accurate record.

3. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS (Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mark Cummins (Brent), Dorothy Jakes (Birchen Grove Residents' Association), Harry Mackie (Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre), and Leo Batten (Welsh Harp Conservation Group).

4. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS (Item 3)

No interests were declared.

5. PUBLIC SPEAKING ARRANGEMENTS (Item 4)

No members of the public had asked to address the Committee.

6. WELSH HARP MANAGEMENT PLAN (BRENT) (Item 5)

Leslie Williams presented a progress report from Brent's Director of Environment and Culture detailing progress on the Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan and related issues.

The Committee were verbally informed that the dam wall works (in section 3.4 of the report) were finished except some tidying up works.

The Committee were also verbally informed that a further meeting of the respective officers had been organised for 23 November to discuss joint action and communications.

Discussion on the report ensued.

Elizabeth Fitzgerald (Local Agenda 21) asked whether the injunction was against the three rave organisers and whether it was permanent. Leslie Williams with the caveat that he was not a legal officer understood that the injunction was effective against the two named rave organisers, covered all the land owned by the two Boroughs; and was permanent. Judy Shepherd (West Hendon Community Forum) stated that the injunction was deterring other rave organisers.

RESOLVED – That the progress report on the Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan and related issues be noted.

7. WELSH HARP MANAGEMENT PLAN (Item 6)

Mark Evison presented a progress report from Barnet's Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport on the position of the Local Nature Reserve (LNR) byelaws and on-going site management.

The Committee were verbally informed that it was hoped the shutters to the bird hides (in section 8.6 of the report) would be fitted the following morning.

Discussion on the report ensued.

Roy Beddard (Welsh Harp Conservation Group) informed members that the Welsh Harp Conservation Group had repaired their own hides at their expense and had fitted standard locks to all three hides to allow easier access.

Councillor Julie Johnson enquired whether there had been any progress with the respective Police teams for Barnet and Brent. Mark Evison replied that the matter had not been discussed yet as Brent Police were not present at the last liaison meeting.

Councillor Julie Johnson asked whether the noise and nuisance team could respond to complaints about noise nuisance such as raves, loud music and other anti-social behaviour at the Welsh Harp. Geoffrey Johnson (Woolmead Residents' Association) enquired whether the noise and nuisance team could respond to noise affecting wildlife as it was understood that the Police cannot respond unless asked by Barnet's Environment Health Service.

At the suggestion of Mark Evison, the Committee agreed that a noise nuisance officer be invited to the next meeting to answer their queries.

At the suggestion of the Chairman, the Committee agreed that officers investigate whether the Police can answer calls on disturbance of the peace.

Clive Cohen (London Wildlife Trust) requested that the Council acted to protect wildlife. Roy Beddard (Welsh Harp Conservation Group) requested that officers contact Natural England about what legal powers were available.

Councillor Hugh Rayner questioned whether wildlife was harmed by noise and nuisance. Leslie Williams responded that wildlife could be harmed by continuous disturbances.

Councillor Will Motley requested that officers joined and checked rave websites to see whether any raves were planned. Councillor Mary Farrell added that many officers had already reviewed rave websites for intelligence purposes and it was hoped that this would make it easier to stop raves or obtain injunctions against their organisers.

RESOLVED – That the progress report on the position of the Local Nature Reserve (LNR) byelaws and on-going site management be noted.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS (Item 7)

RESOLVED – That the 5 February and 3 May meeting dates be noted.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS: ILLEGAL FISHING (Item 8)

Judy Shepherd (West Hendon Community Forum) tabled a fishing reel found recently at the Welsh Harp. Mark Evison responded by stating that the reservoir was owned and managed by the British Waterways, who have no enforcement team, and would be monitoring the situation. The former Youth Sailing Base was currently controlled by Barnet's Corporate Procurement Section. The boundary of the base had been inspected and an extension to the fence would be installed to prevent access from the bridge parapet. The Police Safer Neighbourhood Team are regularly informing anglers to move from this location.

Mark Evison explained that anglers over 12 years of age were required to hold a UK rod licence. The Environment Agency employ bailiffs that patrol and issue tickets to those without a licence. However, if an angler causes problems on the bank or gives false details, extra fines can be awarded up to £2,500. However, if an angler holds a fishing licence, no action can be taken. Councillor Johnson suggested that this seemed the way forward as British Waterways had no enforcement team. Geoffrey Johnson (Woolmead Residents' Association) felt that Barnet should prosecute any anglers that trespassed onto its land.

Clive Cohen (London Wildlife Trust) suggested that Natural England could be contacted to give advice. Councillor Julie Johnson informed members that British Waterways were erecting 'no fishing signs' on the Brent side.

10. ANY OTHER ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES AREA URGENT (Item 9)

Matters Arising from the minutes

Councillor Mary Farrell requested that matters arising from the minutes be placed on future agendas.

Bidding to the Big Lottery Fund

Clive Cohen (London Wildlife Trust) informed members that the Councils could approach the Big Lottery Fund for the Breathing Spaces Grant award as they have a large budget that needs to be claimed.

Health and Safety Risks

Clive Cohen (London Wildlife Trust) tabled an e-mail that he had received from Graham Smith, Water Supervisor London (British Waterways) in which it highlighted that the Brent Reservoir had:

- very strong under currents during times of serious flood conditions that would be life threatening if anyone was in the water when the flood gates opened; and
- blue green algae and Wiells disease in the water which are potentially life threatening.

Signs

Councillor Julie Johnson asked whether signs could be erected in Polish. The Chairman replied that icons might be better. Judy Shepherd (West Hendon Community Forum) informed the members that an article on the Welsh Harp had been printed in the local weekly Polish newspaper.

The meeting ended at 8.10pm