

MINUTES OF THE WELSH HARP JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 13th November 2007 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Farrell (Chair, London Borough of Brent), Councillors Motley, O'Sullivan and Wharton (London Borough of Brent), Councillors Johnson and Rayner (London Borough of Barnet) and Roy Beddard (Welsh Harp Conservation Group), Geoffrey Johnson (Woolmead Residents' Association), Molly Savage (Local Agenda 21), John Shepherd (Welsh Harp Sailing Association) and Judy Shepherd (West Hendon Community Forum).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Hart and Leo Batten (Welsh Harp Conservation Group), Clive Cohen (London Wildlife Trust), John Colmans (London Wildlife Trust), Harry Mackie (Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre), Kate Mitchell (Natural England), Brian Turgoose (Welsh Harp Sailing Association) and Tara Vernon (Environment Agency).

Also in attendance were Leslie Williams (Brent Parks Service) and John Van Rheede Toas (Barnet Parks Service).

1. Introductions and Membership Changes

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and announced that, on the agreement of the committee, there were to be some membership alterations. She announced that Cllr Wharton was to replace Cllr Cummins as a representative of the London Borough of Brent, that Kate Mitchell was to become the representative of Natural England (formerly English Nature) and that Tara Vernon was the new member for the Environment Agency.

RESOLVED:-

that the Committee agree to the membership changes as listed above.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were none declared.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 17th July 2007

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 17th July 2007 be received and approved as an accurate record.

4. Matters Arising

Metropolitan Housing Corporation

It was reported that officers had written to the Metropolitan Housing Corporation and that it was hoped they would be able to provide a presentation to the committee at forthcoming meeting. It was also suggested that Barratt Metropolitan be included in the invitation.

5. Welsh Harp Management Plan (Brent) - update

Leslie Williams introduced an item regarding the Welsh Harp management plan. He reported that the revised plan, presented in draft at the last meeting,

had received a number of minor amendments since then but no significant changes and was now ready to be published. Therefore the plan was now presented to the Committee for approval.

Moving on to report on work and issues that had arisen since the last meeting, Leslie Williams asked the committee to note the management work at the Neasden Recreation Ground including new litter and dog waste bins, that problems with raves over the summer had been dealt with in conjunction with Barnet Council and the police and that work on the dam walls and reinstatement of grasslands had been successfully completed.

It was further reported that the Environment Agency Brent Council's Environmental Health, and the local community were continuing to carry out clearance work on the canal feeder and reservoir outfall and to remove fly-tips in the area but that this work would continue throughout the winter.

Regarding the Green Flag award application, Leslie Williams explained that the award body's feedback was included as an appendix to the report and that officers were working to review these findings.

With regard to the issue of raves, it was reported that, due to advance intelligence or public warnings, action had been taken, in conjunction with the police and Barnet Council officers, to prevent or contain three raves over the summer months. Officers hoped to be as successful in the future but stressed that in many cases this relied on advance warnings from the public.

Finally, Leslie Williams reported that the Brent Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) which will also serve as the Corporate BAP for the Council had been approved and that Brent Council Sports Services had initiated a series of 'healthy walks' around the nature reserve to encourage residents to visit.

Following questions it was reported that the number of staff at the nature reserve changed with the seasons with more time being spent at the site in the summer months.

RESOLVED:-

- that the report be noted.
- that the reviewed management plan be agreed.

7. Welsh Harp Management Plan (Barnet) – update

John Van Rheede Toas introduced a report giving an update on the Welsh Harp Management Plan (Barnet). He asked the committee to note several specific items from the report including the increased profile being given to wardens and other officers, particularly over the summer months, and the work they were doing to patrol the area and the work they were undertaking such as litter collection and maintenance tasks. It was noted however that patrols would drop during the winter due to the normal decrease in usage during these months.

On the subject of BBQs it was reported that loopholes had been discovered in the existing bylaws that were preventing effective action from being taken and that it was hoped to address these in the new bylaws that had been presented to the Secretary of State.

Other issues mentioned were meetings that had been held with the local Iranian population and the drowning of a man in the reservoir when it was reported that the situation was handled quickly once the body discovered.

During discussion there were questions asked relating to the presence of the park wardens, their uniforms and their powers to take action. Officers responded that the wardens were dressed in uniforms and high visibility vests and that they were tasked to regularly patrol the Welsh Harp area and the West Hendon playing fields and that they had powers under the bylaws to take action in most situations but that they were trained to call the police when necessary. Members of the committee expressed the view that the wardens were not on patrol as often as suggested and officers and Barnet Councillors were asked to investigate this issue and report back to the committee. Officers were also asked to investigate whether staff had been sufficiently trained and were aware of their powers, for example in preventing people swimming or fishing in the reservoir.

RESOLVED:-

that the report be noted.

8. Planning Issues

The Chair asked the Committee to note that Brent had published its Local Development Plan and that an original option to change the status of the land around the Welsh Harp Education Centre had been rejected and that consequently it was still zoned as metropolitan open land and so would continue to enjoy its current levels of protection against development.

Members were also asked to note that Natural England had been approached by developers looking to purchase and demolish a number of houses local to the nature reserve with the plan of building a number of new style houses or blocks of flats.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Consultative Committee would take place on Tuesday 12th February 2008.

10. Any Other Urgent Business

History of the Brent Reservoir

A magazine article presenting some information on the history of the Welsh Harp Reservoir, particularly in respect of its designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, was presented to the Committee for information purposes.

Sea Cadets

The Committee was asked to note, following the discussions about Training Ship Broadsword at the last meeting, that there was a difference between this group, with its cadets, and the official Ministry of Defence Sea Cadets scheme and that there were Sea Cadets who were successfully operating at the Welsh Harp reservoir at the current time.

The meeting ended at 8:14pm

M FARRELL
Chair

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