

MINUTES OF THE WELSH HARP JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 2nd September 2003 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Harrod (Chair), Councillor McGovern and Councillor O'Sullivan (London Borough of Brent), Councillor Sodha (Vice-Chair), Councillor Offord and Councillor Ghosh (London Borough of Barnet), Frank Hewlett (Barnet Council for Sport and Recreation), Dorothy Jakes (Birchen Grove Residents' Association), Mike Manuel (British Waterways), Peter Bussen (English Nature), David Hobbs (Environment Agency), Julie Johnson (Local Agenda 21), Annie Chipchase and John Colmans (London Wildlife Trust), Leo Batten (Welsh Harp Conservation Group), Malcolm Scott (Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre Action Group), Brian Turgoose (Welsh Harp Sailing Association), Haydn Matthews (Welsh Harp Youth Sailing Base), Harry Mackie (West Hendon Youth Club) and Jean Ivatt (Woolmead Avenue Residents and Welsh Harp Area).

The following officers were also in attendance: Leslie Williams (Brent Council Parks Service), James Rea (Barnet Greenspaces Quality Officer) and Mark Evison (Barnet Greenspaces Development).

The following Councillors were also in attendance: Cllr Michael Lyon (Lead Member for Education, Arts and Libraries, London Borough of Brent) and Cllr Lesley Jones (Lead Member for Environment and Planning, London Borough of Brent)

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Burton (London Borough of Barnet), Meg Game (Greater London Authority), Tim Simms (Princes Park Youth Football Club), Roy Beddard (Welsh Harp Conservation Group), Graham Myers (Welsh Harp Environment Centre) and John Bird (West Hendon Community Forum).

1. Election of Vice Chair

RESOLVED:

that Councillor Sodha be elected Vice-Chair of the Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2003/4.

2. Declarations of Interest

Leo Batten and John Colmans both declared an interest in item 7 regarding the Welsh Harp Eco-Park Feasibility Study and agreed not to take part in the discussion or voting thereon.

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 17th June 2003**

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the meeting held on 17th June 2003 be approved as a true and accurate record.

4. **Matters Arising**

Item 10 – Welsh Harp Environment Centre Redevelopment

Councillors Jones and Lyon of the London Borough of Brent's Executive were introduced and spoke about the Environment Centre. They outlined the current position of the centre with regard to recent problems such as fires, break-ins and closures. They informed the committee that the current centre was running at a loss and that Brent council had allocated an extra £26,000 of subsidy for the current year. It was estimated that the centre would require an increase of £45,000 the following year.

The Committee were informed that an arrangement to run the centre in combination with the London Borough of Barnet was not now going ahead after Barnet withdrew their involvement.

In general discussion, questions were asked as to why Barnet had withdrawn and if there was a chance of them coming back in. The Barnet councillors agreed to find out and report back. A question was also raised as to whether the increased funding for the following year had been allocated. Councillor Lyon responded that this was not the case at the moment as the following years council budgets had not yet been agreed. The Chair then called for a vote on a resolution expressing the Committee's support for the continued funding and operation of the centre by both Brent and Barnet councils.

RESOLVED:

that the Committee supported the continuance of the Welsh Harp Environment Centre and asked that the relevant directors in Brent and Barnet ensure that the centre was adequately funded for the education of children in both boroughs.

5. **Welsh Harp Reservoir Management Plan**

Leslie Williams presented a report which updated the Committee on the Welsh Harp Reservoir Management Plan. He stated that Transport for London had surveyed the current Capital Ring walking route through the borough and specifically Welsh Harp Reservoir, and had concluded that no diversion of the current route should be recommended.

Barnet Officers provided a verbal update on the progress of the Heritage Lottery Award. The committee were informed that several hundred thousand pounds have been spent on projects including an additional footpath, a bird hide and a raised disabled viewing platform.

During discussion, concerns were raised over the amount of litter on the site. Problems were reported in areas covered by both Brent and Barnet and officers were asked to look into the problem. British Waterways responded to a question regarding flytipping with the explanation that the waste had been removed, the site secured and that legal action was being undertaken against those responsible.

RESOLVED:

that the report be noted.

6. **British Waterways Update**

Peter Walker (British Waterways) gave a presentation on British Waterways' plans for Brent Reservoir (Welsh Harp). Under the Reservoirs Act 1975, British Waterways inspected the dam at the reservoir in 1999 and were then preparing to follow the recommendations arising from that inspection report. This involved increasing the height of the non-overtopping parts of the dam, adding a concrete sub-surface to the downstream face of the dam, reducing seepage through the structure and reducing vegetation on the left bank to allow easier inspection of that part of the dam.

It was reported that British Waterways had a legal requirement to carry out these works. The Committee were informed that environmental impact surveys were being progressed and that the impact both on the environment and on local residents, specifically regarding noise, dust and disruption was being studied. It was noted that site access would be via Birchen Grove and Runbury Circle.

In discussion, a question was asked as to why the works weren't carried out when the reservoir was emptied circa 2001. In reply, Peter Walker explained that funding had only just been arranged. Concerns were expressed as to the environmental impact and it was suggested that mitigation planting be investigated as a way of softening the impact of the works. It was also suggested that British Waterways make use of the local knowledge of the groups on the Committee when preparing their environmental studies. It was requested that British Waterways provide a single, well-publicised phone number for residents to ring if they had concerns or if problems arose.

RESOLVED:

that the presentation be noted.

7. **Welsh Harp Eco-Park Feasibility Study**

Malcolm Scott presented a report which outlined a proposal for a feasibility study into creating an Eco-park at Welsh Harp and the associated costs. The study was costed at £26,500 but Malcolm Scott recommended adding £1100 for expenses and a similar amount as a contingency budget. He suggested that the councils should meet 50% of the total cost with each council providing half this figure.

During discussion, a question was asked as to whether the study was worthwhile enough to justify the costs and whether there was enough emphasis placed on transport. In reply, Malcolm Scott suggested that the councils could utilise their own expertise and contacts in the area of transport planning. Concerns were raised that the suggested list of consultations during the project failed to include a consultant specifically for Barnet residents. Issues of vandalism and the prospect of the park making a profit were also raised together with future funding requirements.

The current education centre was again discussed and it was suggested that better marketing would help improve take up of the services offered. It was pointed out that the centre had been very successful in the past. The Chair reiterated that Brent Council remained committed to the education centre.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the report be noted;
- (ii) that the respective councils be requested to provide funding of £7,500 each as their contribution to the overall costs of the feasibility study.

8. **Anti-Social Behaviour**

Peter Bussen (English Nature) outlined concerns regarding powers to deal with anti-social behaviour. It was reported that English Nature only had limited powers and that other bodies were also responsible for preventing problem behaviour. It was noted that specific problem areas included the persecution of wildlife, litter, fires and the cutting down of trees.

A general discussion followed during which it was suggested that there was insufficient regulatory presence within Welsh Harp. Officers responded that resources in both boroughs were increasing and more enforcement agents were available. It was noted that British Waterways had responsibility over all of the water area and some of the land and that therefore neither of the two Boroughs had any Bye-law enforcement ability over British Waterways water/land.

RESOLVED:

that the relevant parties would look to create a combined leaflet with contact phone numbers to allow members of the public to report problems.

9. **Date of Next Meeting**

RESOLVED:

that it be noted that the next meeting of the Consultative Committee was scheduled for Tuesday, 9th December 2003 at Brent Town Hall.

10. **Any Other Urgent Business**

Birchen Grove Car Park

Brian Turgoose reported that due to car damage within this car park, the police had advised the Welsh Harp Sailing Club to erect warning notices to car users. He asked the committee to endorse the sailing club's actions and also to ask the Environment Department to pay for the cost of the notices, totalling £200. The Chair requested copies of the correspondence and would ask the appropriate officers to investigate.

Committee Attendance

Jean Ivatt presented a question regarding the attendance of the committee by various member bodies. It was noted that as some bodies had not attended meetings for a long period it was unclear whether they still wished to remain on the committee.

RESOLVED:

that the committee requested that officers write to all organisations who had not attended any of the previous 4 meetings to establish whether they wished to remain on the Committee.

The meeting ended at 9.42 pm

R HARROD
Chair