

MINUTES OF THE WELSH HARP JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 19 July 2011 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: - Councillor Ashraf (Chair) (LB Brent), Councillor Hart (Vice Chair) (LB Barnet), Councillor Johnson (LB Barnet), Councillor Kataria (LB Brent), Councillor Khatri (LB Barnet), Councillor Rayner (LB Barnet), Roy Beddard (Welsh Harp Conservation Group), Clive Cohen (London Wildlife Trust), Liz Hall (Welsh Harp Sailing Association), Geoffrey Johnson (Woolmead Residents' Association), Harry Mackie (Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre), Molly Savage (Local Agenda 21) and Judy Shepherd (West Hendon Community Forum)

1. Election of Chair

RESOLVED: - that councillor Ashraf be elected Chair for the 2011-12 municipal year.

2. Election of Vice Chair

RESOLVED: - that councillor Hart be elected Vice-Chair for the 2011-12 municipal year.

3. Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests

None declared

4. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 March 2011

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 March 2011 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting subject to the following amendments: -

- Minute 6 to note the explanation of why it had been difficult to get McDonalds involved in the clean-up day.

5. Matters arising (if any)

Use of Insecticides

With regard to Minute number 4, Clive Cohen (London Wildlife Trust) noted that Jenny Warren (Greenspaces Manager – Barnet Council) had indicated that it was not a priority of the borough of Barnet to communicate the effect to land owners of the use of insecticides. Clive Cohen advised the committee that the Crop Protection Association (CPA) produced a leaflet regarding this matter and that he had liaised with property services to ensure that copies of this leaflet were distributed to libraries and relevant properties. Clive Cohen added that he had suggested to the Crop Protection Association that they contact all other councils to propose a similar plan of action.

Bank at former youth sailing base site

The Chair noted that it was suggested at the previous meeting under 'Any Other Business' that Barratt Homes be invited to attend the next meeting of the committee with regard to the issue of the poor condition of the bank at the former youth sailing base site. The Chair queried whether this had been raised with Barratt Homes. Councillor Julie Johnson provided a brief update on this matter, noting in particular that the marketing suite at the site had now been completed. She suggested that Barratt Homes may have wished to wait until the building of the suite was finished before improving the bank; however, they were not at present making the best of the bank. Councillor Julie Johnson added that she had understood that the bank would be planted up with appropriate plants after the build was complete. Roy Beddard (Welsh Harp Conservation Group) advised that further information was required from the planning department regarding the relevant conditions agreed and emphasised that it was important that the bank be replanted once the marketing suite was removed. Jenny Warren advised that she would follow up this issue and would explore the possibility of whether an interim measure could be applied whilst the marketing suite was in place. She added that she would contact Natural England for assistance. Following further discussion, it was agreed that Barratt Homes be invited to attend the next meeting of the committee. Councillor Hugh Rayner suggested that a Barratt Homes should be advised of the specific issues on which the committee would like further information. The Chair requested that any specific questions that the committee would like to put to Barratt Homes be emailed to him at cllr.javaid.ashraf@brent.gov.uk.

Environmental Impact Survey / contamination of waterways

Referring to the paragraph on the Dollis Valley Green Walk Project, also located under 'any other business', a member of the committee noted that at the previous meeting it had been suggested that an environmental impact survey be conducted. This suggestion had followed the announcement that treatment to invasive species and maintenance work would be carried out to the brook. It was subsequently queried if there was any update available on this issue. Councillor Hart advised that he believed this issue related to the concern that effluence flowing into the brook higher upstream from built up areas was nourishing weeds which were causing considerable problems in the brook. Councillor Julie Johnson added that there had been a similar issue in the recent past due to incorrectly connected washing machines. Clive Cohen noted that this issue had been investigated a number of years ago with waterways between Totteridge in Barnet and the Welsh Harp being tested. It had been found that 32 different ponds, lakes and waterways had been contaminated with effluence on route to the Welsh Harp. Clive Cohen emphasised that this contamination had to be stopped at source. Following further discussion it was agreed that it should be ascertained whether testing of waterways still took place and if so, whether the results were publically available. It was noted that this could be checked with Neal Hider of the Environment Agency.

Treatment of Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam

Turning to the subject of stem injections, briefly referred to at Minute number 4, Clive Cohen suggested that with regard to treatment of Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam, flailing should take place prior to flowering in order to ensure that there was no risk of pesticides/insecticides getting in to the food chain. Jenny Warren advised that the local authority was legally required to treat Japanese Knotweed and that stem injection had been deemed the most efficient way to do

this. Flailing would not be effective as it only took a single rhizome for the plant to spread. With regard to Himalayan Balsam, this needed to be pulled up before it produced seeds.

Mayor's Priority Parks Project – Update

The Chair noted that The London Borough of Barnet had won the London Mayor's priority parks project and had been awarded £400,000. He further asserted that whilst it was not directly within the committees remit it might prove useful as background information to have an update at the next meeting on how this money would be applied.

RESOLVED: -

- i. that Barratt Homes be invited to attend the next meeting of the committee with regard to the bank at the former Youth Sailing Base site.
- ii. that it be ascertained via Neal Hider, whether testing of waterways still took place and if so, whether the results were publically available.
- iii. that further information regarding how the funds awarded to Barnet Council via the London Mayor's priority parks project were applied be provided to the committee

6. Welsh Harp Management Plan (Brent)

Leslie Williams introduced a report updating the committee on the progress on the Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan. The Management Plan was jointly managed by the three main local land-holding organisations: Brent Council, British Waterways and the London Borough of Barnet.

Leslie Williams advised that a review was due of the administration charges and the river Brent catchment managerial process. Leslie Williams invited any comments of either of these issues and noted that any comments that the committee might have would be fed in to the review.

Turning to the issue of the Parks Warden service, Leslie Williams advised that this service had been significantly reduced as part of the recent reorganisation of Brent Council and was now reliant of the slightly increased number of mobile wardens. The mobile wardens worked in two shifts and there was a maximum of two wardens on patrol at any one time. It was anticipated that up to three agency staff could be employed during the peak months of usage of parks and open spaces, from August to October. Additional training would be provided to the grounds maintenance team to allow them to take over some of the tasks of the wardens. The grounds maintenance team would visit the Welsh Harp at regular intervals.

The committee was advised that summary information regarding the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for the Welsh Harp could be obtained from the Biodiversity Action Report System (BARS) website, which was the online system for national reporting of BAPs. Brent was currently looking at treating Japanese Knotweed with herbicide and action was also planned with regard to Giant Hogweed, which was not harmful to wildlife but could represent a public health issue as it produced a sap which could damage skin.

Leslie Williams concluded his report by noting that Brent Council had recently obtained a small sum via a 106 agreement for use in the Welsh Harp area for flood alleviation.

During discussion the committee raised several issues as follows: -

- Clive Cohen noted that Barnet and Brent council's employed different approaches to the treatment of Japanese Knotweed and queried why the approaches were not co-ordinated. Leslie Williams advised that the two councils did liaise with each other but each council would select the most appropriate option for its circumstances. Councillor Julie Johnson queried if joint meetings still took place to discuss the management plan. Leslie Williams advised that the councils liaised informally with each other often by email and telephone. Jenny Warren advised that details regarding the contractors used for instance were regularly exchanged; however, it was difficult to meet face to face on a regular basis as the stakeholder group encompassed five different organisations.
- Councillor Hugh Rayner queried the impact that the reduction of park wardens would have on the enforcement of the bylaw, under which holding barbeques in the Welsh Harp area was prohibited. Leslie Williams advised that after a period of circa eight years, this bylaw was just now in its final stage of approval. Park Wardens would be empowered to enforce these bylaws by issuing tickets and they could call the police for assistance if necessary. Councillor Julia Johnson advised that in order to address a lack of park wardens in Barnet during the summer months, discussions had been held with the safer neighbourhood teams which had resulted in the provision of police/community officer presence in the Welsh Harp. It was agreed that Councillor Dhiraj Kataria would liaise with other Welsh Harp Councillors and Barnet Councillor Julia Johnson to pursue a similar approach. A further query was raised regarding the adequacy of the signage provided regarding barbeques. Following further discussion and the assertions of a number of different opinions on the subject, it was agreed that a report summarising the signage options, budget implications and recommendations be presented to the committee at the meeting following the next.
- Councillor Julie Johnson queried who could check if people fishing in the area had an appropriate license. Roy Beddard advised that the Environment Agency issued rod licenses; however, it could be very difficult to catch people systematically fishing without a license. It was important that fishing restrictions were enforced as it created significant disturbance to birds nesting at the waterside. Clive Cohen noted that in other areas a 'friends of' organisation had been formed and via that group, a scheme initiated whereby voluntary rangers walked the area and reported any wrongdoings observed. Councillor Julia Johnson advised that the possibility of setting up a 'friends of' organisation had been explored with the Welsh Harp Community Association. She further noted that there had previously been a booklet made available by Barnet Council which outlined the requirements for setting up such an organisation and which provided helpful advice including from where funding could be obtained. Jenny Warren advised that the leaflet referred to by Councillor Julie Johnson was in the process of being updated.

RESOLVED: - that a report summarising the signage options, budget implications and recommendations be presented to the committee at the meeting following the next.

7. Report from the London Borough of Barnet

Jenny Warren presented a report updating the committee on Barnet council's position on the Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and on-going site management. The committee heard that there was an on-going maintenance requirement for several Willow trees sited to the rear of Dehar Crescent. Before work could proceed on these trees, it had been necessary to obtain the consent of Natural England. The committee was referred to Appendix A of the report, at which a schedule for Tree Management Works (Welsh Harp area 4b) was included, alongside a consent letter from Natural England. The committee was advised that the work on the trees to the rear of Dehar Crescent had since been completed.

Turning to the subject of Barnet Council's Japanese Knotweed Control Programme, it was reported that following an annual inspection in April 2011, one area of new infestation had been located. There were also significant areas populated by Giant Hogweed. The weed control programme for invasive species would continue, and further control measures in the Welsh Harp would be carried out. The committee was informed that the Environment Agency had at present delayed this programme of works, pending the completion of further training by the contractor employed. It was hoped that this delay would not cause the window of opportunity for treatment of these plants to be missed.

Jenny Warren drew the committee's attention to 9.1.3 of the report, highlighting that the Welsh Harp Working Group had not met for over six months. Consequently, it was felt that a review of the group and its ability to commit and deliver should be considered. The organisations which comprised the group were the London Borough of Barnet, the London Borough of Brent, British Waterways, the Welsh Harp Conservationists and the Welsh Harp Sailing Association.

In concluding her report to the committee, Jenny Warren advised that a number of changes to the infrastructure at Welsh Harp had taken place. Three new ranger litter bins and two new wooden sleeper benches had been installed along the main footpath from Brent to Cool Oak Lane and one dog bin had been removed from the west Hendon side of the Welsh Harp. A low metal vehicle barrier had also been installed to the car park entrance of Woodfield Park in April 2011 to help reduce the amount of fly tipping which was occurring in the car park. The committee further heard that in response to the increase in litter during the summer months, weekend litter patrols had commenced. A Health and Safety officer would be conducting an inspection of the Welsh Harp site with respect to Blue Green Algae, whilst installing signage around the water edge.

During discussion, several members referred to the issue waterways/bodies of water within the Welsh Harp area becoming hyper-eutrophic due to chemicals/substances from residential areas washing/flowing into them. Clive Cohen highlighted that there was a leaflet available from the Environment Agency which provided information on misconnected appliances and suggested that this information be distributed to residents. Councillor Hugh Rayner noted that many people would not know if their appliances were misconnected. Leslie Williams

informed the committee that a previous investigation into the number of misconnections in an area had found thirty misconnections out of four hundred properties. Unfortunately, such investigation took considerable time to complete. He further noted that from 1st October 2011, the liability for private sewers would be transferred to the water companies. Jenny Warren explained that the responsibility for identifying misconnections lay either with the general public or the Environment Agency; however, water companies would be responsible for the outflow from a property and so their co-operation would be required in order to trace the source of contamination. Unfortunately, these agencies could not compel an individual to fix a misconnection and so the council was required for the purposes of enforcement. Jenny Warren added that despite the difficulties outlined above, attempts to tackle this problem had been quite successful. She further noted that Thames Water had a team dedicated to this task and the Environment Agency had completed a significant piece of related work. Following this discussion, it was agreed that Clive Cohen would arrange for copies of the leaflets to be forwarded to the clerk for distribution to the committee.

Several queries were raised regarding the tree management programme. Jenny Warren advised that Barnet Council had completed a survey of its parks and this included the nature reserve. The Welsh Harp was a site of special scientific interest (or triple S site) and that tree maintenance took place biannually. Roy Beddard emphasised that in order to maintain the triple S rating it was important that a wide range of habitats were maintained in the Welsh Harp. Geoffrey Johnson (Woolmead Residents' Association) queried about the maintenance of trees in Woolmead Avenue. Councillor Julie Johnson advised that she understood it to be a site on a maintenance cycle of five years. Roy Beddard explained that the trees on that site were maintained by the Welsh Harp Conservation Group (WHCG) and maintenance had last taken place three to four years ago. If funding was available, the WHCG would arrange for further maintenance work in the future. In response to a query, Councillor Julie Johnson confirmed that she believed that the council should be responsible for maintenance of the trees at this site and added that she would explore this issue further.

Leslie Williams agreed that he would try to find a large map of the Welsh Harp area for future meetings of the committee.

With reference to the table included at Appendix A to the report, the Chair commented that it would be useful for a date for completion of the works to be included.

RESOLVED: - that the report be noted.

8. Planning Issues (if any)

A report was tabled by Tom Wyld, Senior Planning Officer, Barnet Council, providing an update on the West Hendon Regeneration. The report noted that Barratt Metropolitan LLP (BM LLP) had indicated that they would submit an application to the planning department to vary the existing Outline Planning Application (W13937/04). The changes proposed were in relation to phasing, car parking and affordable housing. The planning application had not yet been submitted and the application

would be subject to consultation, including with all organisations that attend the Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee.

RESOLVED: - that the report be noted.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The committee noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 9 November 2011.

10. Any Other Urgent Business

Cool Oak Lane Bridge

A member of the committee informed the meeting that there had been considerable problems caused by Lorries using the Cool Oak Lane Bridge in the Welsh Harp Area. These Lorries were using the bridge on route to a site which was manufacturing low grad compost. The materials being carried by these uncovered Lorries was being distributed in the form of dust all over the road and surrounding area during transit. Jenny Warren advised that it was illegal for a lorry carrying such material to do so uncovered. It was suggested that any further complaints regarding this matter be forwarded to Barnet Council.

West Hendon Allotment Society

RESOLVED: - that West Hendon Allotment Society be invited to make an application to join the Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee.

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm

CLLR ASHRAF
Chair