



# Brent

## Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee

Thursday 27 July 2023 at 6.00 pm

This will be held as an online virtual meeting. The link to view proceedings is available [HERE](#)

### Membership:

#### Members

#### Representing

Councillors:

Ernest Ambe Esq

London Borough of Barnet

Andrea Bilbow

London Borough of Barnet

Alan Schneiderman

London Borough of Barnet

Rishikesh Chakraborty

London Borough of Barnet

Krupa Sheth

London Borough of Brent

Saqib Butt

London Borough of Brent

Parvez Ahmed

London Borough of Brent

Mary Mitchell

London Borough of Brent

#### Substitute Members (Brent Council)

Councillors:

Amer Agha, Harbi Farah, Arshad Mahmood and Liz Dixon

#### Substitute Members (Barnet Council)

Councillors:

Nagus Narenthira, Sara Conway, Humayune Khalick and Andreas Ioannidis

## Membership Continued

### Organisations

Brent River Catchment Partnership  
Canal and River Trust  
Cleaner Earth UK  
Cool Oak  
Environment Agency  
Friends of Welsh Harp  
Hendon Rifle Club  
London Wildlife Trust  
Natural England  
Phoenix Canoe Club  
Silkstream Friends  
Silver Park Jubilee Residents Association  
Thames 21  
Thames Water  
Training Ship Broadsword  
Welsh Harp Conservation Group  
Welsh Harp Sailing Association  
West Hendon Allotment Society  
West Hendon Residents' Association / Friends of York Park

**For further information contact:** Adam Woods, Governance Officer  
020 8937 4737, [Adam.Woods@brent.gov.uk](mailto:Adam.Woods@brent.gov.uk)

For electronic copies of minutes, reports and agendas, and to be alerted when the minutes of this meeting have been published visit: **[democracy.brent.gov.uk](http://democracy.brent.gov.uk)**

If a Member is aware they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest\* in an item of business, they must declare its existence and nature at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent and must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item.

If a Member is aware they have a Personal Interest\*\* in an item of business, they must declare its existence and nature at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent.

If the Personal Interest is also a Prejudicial Interest (i.e. it affects a financial position or relates to determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission, or registration) then (unless an exception at 14(2) of the Members Code applies), after disclosing the interest to the meeting the Member must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item, except that they may first make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to the matter, provided that the public are allowed to attend the meeting for those purposes.

#### **\*Disclosable Pecuniary Interests:**

- (a) **Employment, etc.** - Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit gain.
- (b) **Sponsorship** - Any payment or other financial benefit in respect expenses in carrying out duties as a member, or of election; including from a trade union.
- (c) **Contracts** - Any current contract for goods, services or works, between the Councillors or their partner (or a body in which one has a beneficial interest) and the council.
- (d) **Land** - Any beneficial interest in land which is within the council's area.
- (e) **Licences**- Any licence to occupy land in the council's area for a month or longer.
- (f) **Corporate tenancies** - Any tenancy between the council and a body in which the Councillor or their partner have a beneficial interest.
- (g) **Securities** - Any beneficial interest in securities of a body which has a place of business or land in the council's area, if the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body or of any one class of its issued share capital.

#### **\*\*Personal Interests:**

The business relates to or affects:

(a) Anybody of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management, and:

- To which you are appointed by the council;
- which exercises functions of a public nature;
- which is directed is to charitable purposes;
- whose principal purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy (including a political party or trade union).

(b) The interests a of a person from whom you have received gifts or hospitality of at least £50 as a member in the municipal year;

or

A decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting, to a greater extent than the majority of other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the electoral ward affected by the decision, the well-being or financial position of:

- You yourself;
- a member of your family or your friend or any person with whom you have a close association or any person or body who employs or has appointed any of these or in whom they have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £25,000, or any firm in which they are a partner, or any company of which they are a director
- any body of a type described in (a) above.

# Agenda

Item	Page
<b>1 Election of Chair and Vice-Chair 2023-24</b>	
<p>Councillor representatives on the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) are asked to elect a Chair and Vice-Chair for the 2023-24 Municipal Year.</p> <p>In accordance with the JCC Constitution, the nominee for position of Chair in 2023-24 should be from amongst the Council members appointed by the London Borough of Brent. The nominee for Vice-Chair should be from amongst the Council members appointed by the London Borough of Barnet.</p>	
<b>2 Apologies for Absence and Clarification of any Alternate Members</b>	
<b>3 Declarations of Interests</b>	
<p>Members are invited to declare at this stage of the meeting, the nature and existence of any relevant disclosable pecuniary or personal interests in the items on this agenda and to specify the item(s) to which they relate.</p>	
<b>4 Deputations (if any)</b>	
<p>By prior arrangement with the Chair, persons who are not members of the Committee may attend to address the Committee on a particular issue or item. Any members of the public wishing to address the committee should submit their request at least 3 days in advance of the meeting to the contact officer named on the agenda. The request will then be passed to the Chair for consideration.</p>	
<b>5 Minutes of the Previous Meeting</b>	1 - 4
<p>To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on Thursday 16 March 2023 as a correct record.</p>	
<b>6 Matters Arising</b>	
<b>7 Management Plan (Barnet)</b>	5 - 10
<p>To provide an update to the Committee in relation to Council activities during Quarter 1 (Apr-June 2023) in respect of the Welsh Harp / West Hendon Playing Fields.</p>	

## **8 Management Plan (Brent)**

11 - 28

This report presents progress on the Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan since the last meeting of the Committee and during the 2023/24 year to date. The Management Plan is jointly managed by the three main land-holding organisations: Brent Council, the London Borough of Barnet, and the Canal & River Trust.

## **9 Update from the Canal & River Trust**

Verbal

To update Committee members regarding the Welsh Harp Vision document and Winter works at Brent Reservoir.

## **10 Dates of Future Meetings**

To note the following dates for future meetings of the Joint Consultative Committee:

- Thursday 23 November 2023 at 6pm
- Thursday 14 March 2024 at 6pm

## **11 Any Other Urgent Business**

No business other than that appearing on the agenda shall be transacted at the meeting unless the Chair decides that it is urgent. Any member of the Committee wishing to raise an item of urgent business should provide sufficient notice to permit consideration by the Chair.

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## MINUTES OF THE WELSH HARP JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Held as an online meeting on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023 at 7.00 pm

### Members Present (in remote attendance):

Councillor Anne Clarke (Chair)	London Borough of Barnet
Councillor Parvez Ahmed	London Borough of Brent
Councillor Mary Mitchell	London Borough of Brent
Councillor Rishikesh Chakraborty	London Borough of Barnet
Councillor Ernest Amber	London Borough of Barnet
Councillor Liz Dixon	London Borough of Brent
Councillor Saqib Butt	London Borough of Brent
Lewis Elmes	Environment Agency
John Shepherd	Welsh Harp Sailing Association
Manfred Starkl	Welsh Harp Sailing Association
Judy Shepherd	West Hendon Community Forum
Daniela	Friends of the Welsh Harp
Livia Forte	Friends of the Welsh Harp
Ben Watt	Cool Oak Group
Liz Hall	West Hendon Residents Association
Martin Francis	Member of the public
Leila Taheri	Friends of the Welsh Harp
Philip Atkinson	Phoenix Canoe Club
Derrick Chung	West Hendon Residents Association
Matt Merkies	Friends of Silkstream
Stephen Leek	Welsh Harp Conservation Group
Hannah Reid	Thames 21

### 1. Minutes of the previous meeting

AGREED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2022 be approved as a correct record.

### 2. Absence of Members

No apologies for absence received.

### 3. Disclosable Pecuniary interests and Non Pecuniary interests

None.

### 4. London Borough of Barnet Welsh Harp Update

**Matt Gunyon, Greenspaces Services Manager provided an update on the activities to the Committee which include:**

The service is reviewing our volunteer support mechanisms across the whole portfolio in order to ensure all groups have safety systems and appropriate procedures and insurances in place to support any volunteer activities.

The team have been working with the West Hendon Allotment Society to explore an allotment extension project to reclaim old derelict plots within the allotments demise and create a sustainable open space where community food growing is integrated into a wildlife conservation approach to managing the area.

Some improvement and clearance works have been completed to the closed car parking area within Woodfield Park, some additional works are to be completed after which the car park will be made available for the Football and Canoe Clubs to utilise during periods of high use.

In partnership with the Landscape Institute the Council has been delivering a two-stage design competition to secure a multi-disciplinary design team. Stages 1 and 2 have been completed and evaluated. Three organisations were taken to through to Stage 2, LDA Design, Ove Arup & Partners Ltd and Southern Green. The winning bidder will be announced shortly.

Mr Gunyon also informed that his team are working with the in house and contract network and will be developing an updated litter management regime across the whole of the Welsh Harp and surrounding environs.

The Council in partnership with Brent Council, Canals and Rivers Trust, The GLA, The London Wildlife Trust and Thames 21 is developing an overarching Vision for the Welsh Harp and a review of the Management Plan.

Leila Taheri asked what the plan is for after the vision is published. Mr Gunyon advised that once it is published an exhibition will be put together and an action plan created which will sit alongside the vision document. Conversations have already taken place with Heritage Lottery regarding a wider improvement plan for the whole of the area to enhance the existing area of the harp.

## **5. London Borough of Brent Welsh Harp Update**

Leslie Williams (Project Officer, Brent Council) presented a report outlining progress on the Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan since the last meeting of the Committee and during the 2022/23 year to date. The Management Plan is jointly managed by the three mainland-holding organisations: Brent Council, the London Borough of Barnet, and the Canal & River Trust.

Mr Williams noted that the existing plan on the website is still providing an idea of what partners are trying to achieve, cultural background flood control with the action plan pulls out the main points from the management plan.

Currently, discussions with the Council and Ward Councillors are in progress to consider the next steps towards a viable Centre. Thames 21 are continuing to provide some limited services.

A pollution discharge was reported in November 2022, arising from outfalls into a watercourse through the southern woodland and into the Brent Reservoir. This was found to contain suspended solids, possibly of cement washings or drilling slurry. Similar discharges resumed in late December 2022 and early January 2023, and were found to contain similar



material plus other waste, indicating the possibility of two sources. The Environment Agency investigated both incidents.

Leila Taheri asked about the pollution incident and asked what action has taken place. Lewis Elmes advised that the incident/s will be categorised depending on the severity which will dictate the level of response. This will be investigated to narrow down where it comes from which could result in a prosecution. Lewis Elmes agreed to give an update at the next meeting.

**ACTION: LEWIS ELMES**

Manfred Starkl asked for the sailing group to be informed about any pollution incidents to safeguard those sailing on the water. Lewis Elmes noted that there isn't a system in place for this information to be filtered through to all areas of the harp but some thought would be given as to how this can be cascaded going forward.

Leila Taheri suggested taking a sample of the water which may assist with the Environment Agency investigation

Hannah Reid from Thames 21 informed the Committee of an app called River Ranger where the public can report incidents and the link to this was circulated in the meeting.

## **6. Update from Friends of the Welsh Harp**

Leila Taheri presented the report continuing with its grassroots conservation and community activities which include:

- Numerous conservation events have taken place since November 2022 where approx. 7 tonnes of litter have been collected around the Eastern Marsh and towards Brent, A5 woodland area and at the Silkstream plastic floatilla.
- Tree planting of 100 native trees in the field outside Woodfield Primary School
- Building of bee bank at bee garden
- 554 community volunteering hours
- £6,122 work at no cost to either Council

Future events taking place include:

- Monthly conservation event teaming up with WHCG to make insect hotel chain
- Further conservation days will take place during following months

Ms Taheri also gave an update on the proposal for a 'Wellbeing Woodland' to be created on the A5 opposite the new St George's development has been received well from the developer. A site meeting took place to discuss the potential works to boost biodiversity as well as create an attractive entrance to the Welsh Harp for the benefit of the entire community however it is not possible for plants to be put there by Natural England which has been a disappointing outcome.

Harriet Duffield informed the Committee that the Wellbeing Woodland is on a triple SI and provided some information to the committee from Natural England as to the reasons behind this.

Mr Gunyon thanked the Friends of the Welsh Harp for all their continued work and support on the Welsh Harp. Mr Gunyon also offered an explanation and advised that it was worth noting the response given to the group was a broader one with the information relating to the bridge had already been submitted with the wider planning application. Mr Guyon advised

that he would seek a full and up to date response from the planning team on the current status of this and circulate to all members of the Committee.

**ACTION: MR GUNYON**

Mr Gunyon also asked Leila Taheri to make contact with his team to ensure a full risk assessment can be carried out of the next activity day will take place.

Cllr Mitchell asked for a written summary of where the bridge plans currently stand and if there is anything that can be done to stop it.

Cllr Dixon asked if there is any way the bridge works can be halted. Cllr Clarke advised that this was approved many years ago with wider plans for regeneration in the area however less focus was given on the bridge as there was a significant loss of social housing which dominated the discussions at the time.

Cllr Butt suggested an appeal to the planning inspectorate if the plans have been approved, and that legal recourse could be the only way to prevent the bridge going ahead despite it being approved which may affect any appeal.

**7. Meetings for the 2023/24 Municipal Year**

The Chair thanked officers and all members attending the meeting for their efforts in a successful meeting and noted that from July 2023, Brent Council would take over the administration of the Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee meetings.

**8. Any other business**

Judy Shepherd asked in relation to dog walkers around the Welsh Harp area and asked on the number of dogs that one person is allowed to walk. Cllr Ahmed advised that Brent have a limit of 4 dogs per dog walker is allowed. Cllr Clarke informed that Barnet have a limit of up to 6 dogs per walker. Mr Williams asked that if anyone notices a pattern of these walkers to report to either the teams at Barnet or Brent so this can be monitored and action taken.

Date of next meeting: 27<sup>th</sup> July 2023

The meeting closed at 8.06pm

Councillor Anne Clarke  
Chair

	<p><b>Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee</b></p> <p><b>27 July 2023</b></p>
<p><b>Title</b></p>	<p>London Borough of Barnet Welsh Harp Update</p>
<p><b>Report of</b></p>	<p>Executive Director, Adults, Communities and Health</p>
<p><b>Wards</b></p>	<p>West Hendon</p>
<p><b>Status</b></p>	<p>Public</p>
<p><b>Urgent</b></p>	<p>No</p>
<p><b>Key</b></p>	<p>None</p>
<p><b>Enclosures</b></p>	<p>None</p>
<p><b>Officer Contact Details</b></p>	<p>Matthew Gunyon, Head of Greenspaces  <a href="mailto:matthew.gunyon@barnet.gov.uk">matthew.gunyon@barnet.gov.uk</a>            0208 359 7403</p>
<p><b>Summary</b></p>	
<p>To provide an update to the committee in relation to Council activities during Quarter 1 (Apr-June 2023) in respect of the Welsh Harp / West Hendon Playing Fields.</p>	

<p><b>Officers Recommendations</b></p>
<p>1. That the Committee note the contents of the report.</p>

## 1.1 **WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED**

1.2 The Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee (WHJCC) is comprised of Canals and Rivers Trust, Brent Council, Welsh Harp Conservation Group, Welsh Harp Sailing Association and Barnet Council. The committee is a consultative committee and meets on a quarterly basis.

1.3 During April – June 2023 (Quarter 1), the Council progressed a series of activities in relation to the management and operation of West Hendon Playing Fields / Welsh Harp. The committee are requested to note the following;

## 1.4 **Management and Operations**

1.5 There have been no reported illegal encampments during Q1, the Councils Greenspaces and Leisure Team continue to work closely with the Barnet Community Safety Team, the Local Police and other partners to identify and remove encampments when notified.

1.6 A new Volunteer Handbook is due to be finalised and released within the next month. The handbook will offer information on safe ways of working for volunteers.

1.7 The councils Community Safety Team have been commissioned to deliver weekend patrols in a number of parks and open spaces over the summer period. The patrols are intelligence led and sites are included within the patrol based on known issues and reporting, the Welsh Harp and West Hendon Playing Fields fall within the patrol sites list.

1.8 The council has concluded a procurement exercise and awarded the contract to develop of a new Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and a Local Nature Recovery Plan (LNRP replace Biodiversity Action Plans) to Land Use Consultants (LUC). We are currently in the early stages of the commission with LUC however there will be opportunities to contribute to the development of these documents through public consultations and engagement exercises in due course.

1.9 The council have commissioned contractors Maydencroft to undertake enabling work for the proposed extension of the West Hendon Allotments into their disused tenanted land. This work includes ecological surveying before the production of a landscape concept plan then specification for works. The proposals will include new allotment space as well as conservation areas, a pond, orchard, apiary, and event space.

1.10 To further the voluntary litter picking efforts at The Welsh Harp, the council had contract litter pickers sweep the site w/c 03/07/2023 and removed the burnt-out car adjacent to the West Hendon Playing Fields. The council will arrange another contractor litter sweep in the winter when annual soft vegetation has subsided and liaise with Natural England as to dead hedging to mitigate bankside litter around the Silkstream trash screen.

1.11 As members of the Thames21 Brent Catchment Partnership Steering group, the council have approved the establishment of the following working groups: Data, Evidence and Monitoring, Invasive Non-native Species Control, and Eradication of Litter (reducing litter in Brent Rivers is a Catchment Partnership priority). The council will attend regular

meetings (kick-off meetings wc 17th July) with other working group members such as Thames Water, Canal and River Trust, the Environment Agency and other London Boroughs, to discuss how best to deal with these issues across the Brent Catchment, all of which are relevant to the Welsh Harp.

#### 1.12 **West Hendon Playing Fields Master Plan**

1.13 The outline business case for the West Hendon Playing Fields Master plan was approved at Policy and Resources Committee 16 June 2021. This included capital funding of £18.8m to deliver the scheme.

1.14 The Council also remains in dialogue with the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) and the Football Foundation in relation to the submission of future funding applications to deliver court and pitch improvements at West Hendon Playing Fields.

1.15 Following the conclusion of the two stage design competition in partnership with the Landscape Institute the council has awarded the contract to Ove Arup and Partners for design development for West Hendon Playing Fields.

1.16 As the programme develops a series of consultation and engagement activities will be delivered to help inform the design development for the playing fields.

#### 1.17 **Welsh Harp and SSSI Management**

1.18 Working with our in house and contract network we will be developing an updated litter management regime across the whole of the Welsh Harp and surrounding environs. The review of this work has started but workstreams will be delivered after the next season in key hotspot areas where access is restricted.

1.19 Damage to the SSSI caused by neighbouring properties was reported to the Council and the Planning Enforcement Team are working with Natural England to resolve the issues.

1.20 The council in partnership with Brent Council, Canals and Rivers Trust, The GLA, The London Wildlife Trust and Thames 21 is developing an overarching Vision for the Welsh Harp and a review of the Management Plan.

Full update is subject to a separate agenda item.

## 2. **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 The terms of reference of the Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee include that it considers and co-ordinates all the interests of recreation, leisure, maintenance and nature conservation with the object of protecting the Welsh Harp Reservoir and surrounding open land as a unique environment for both recreation and wildlife conservation.

## 3. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED**

3.1 N/A

#### **4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION**

- 4.1 The Council will continue to develop the new and emerging policies as set out in section 1.2.1 of this report.

#### **5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION**

##### **5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance**

- 5.2 Following the declaration of a climate emergency, delivering and implementing the Sustainability Strategy, Climate Action Plan, Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and Biodiversity Strategy is a key corporate priority for the Council.

##### **5.3 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)**

- 5.3.1 The programme of activities listed within this report are delivered within existing resources, some initiatives or tasks may require additional investment which will be considered in the development of new policies and assessed through the Councils budget setting process.

##### **5.4 Social Value**

- 5.4.1 The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2013 requires people who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits. Before commencing a procurement process, commissioners should think about whether the services they are going to buy, or the way they are going to buy them, could secure these benefits for their area or stakeholders.

##### **5.5 Legal and Constitutional References**

- 5.5.1 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 as a way to ensure that use of the site does not result in any damage to its natural features.

- 5.5.2 As set out in the Terms of Reference of the Joint Committee:

“to consider and co-ordinate all the interests of recreation / leisure / maintenance / nature conservation and statutory requirements of the Canals and Rivers Trust (CRT) and the Environment Agency at the Welsh Harp; with the object of protecting the Welsh Harp Reservoir and surrounding open land as a unique environment for both recreation and wildlife conservation”.

Barnet’s Constitution – Article 8 – Joint Arrangements- states at paragraph 8.1 that the Council may establish joint arrangements with one or more Local Authorities. Such

arrangements may involve the appointment of a Joint Committee with these Local Authorities.

## 5.6 Risk Management

5.6.1 *There are no risk management issues associated with this report.*

## 5.7 Equalities and Diversity

5.7.1 Parks and Open Spaces benefit all sectors of the community by improving the local environment. Maintenance is carried out according to the management plan and takes into account requests from residents, users and Members. Improvements are made, wherever possible, to ensure equal access for all users.

The 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups
- foster good relations between people from different groups

The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services.

## 5.8 Corporate Parenting Principles

5.8.1 N/A

## 5.9 Consultation and Engagement

5.9.1 The Consultative Committee continues to meet on a quarterly basis, the committee comprises the land owners, legislative bodies, and third sector volunteer groups who work within the reserve to deliver positive outcomes.

## 5.10 Insight

5.10.1 None.

## 6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1 The Welsh Harp Management Plan can be found on Brent Council's website: [www.brent.gov.uk/parks](http://www.brent.gov.uk/parks) in the biodiversity section.

6.2 [West Hendon Playing Fields Outline Business Case – Policy and Resources Committee 16 July 2021, Agenda Item 9](#)

- 6.3 [Parks and Open Spaces Update – Environment and Climate Change Committee 9 June 2022, Agenda Item 9](#)
- 6.4 [Welsh Harp Vision Update – Environment and Climate Change Committee 6 September 2022, Agenda Item 14](#)



 <b>Brent</b>	<b>Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee</b>  27 July 2023
	<b>Report from the Corporate Director of Resident Services</b>
<b>Welsh Harp Management Plan</b>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Non-Key
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	One Appendix A - Welsh Harp / Brent Reservoir Management Plan: Action Plan for 2023-2024
<b>Background Papers:</b>	
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Leslie Williams, Project Officer, Parks Services Email: <a href="mailto:Leslie.Williams@Brent.gov.uk">Leslie.Williams@Brent.gov.uk</a> Tel: 020 8937 5628

## 1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report presents progress on the Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan since the last meeting of the Committee and during the 2023/24 year to date. The Management Plan is jointly managed by the three main land-holding organisations: Brent Council, the London Borough of Barnet, and the Canal & River Trust.

## 2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the Report.

## 2.0 Detail

3.1 Welsh Harp 'Vision':

The 'Welsh Harp Vision' is due for publication in late July 2023. Please refer to the Canal & River Trust item on the Agenda. The Vision has been prepared by the Canal & River Trust, Barnet Council, Brent Council, the London Wildlife Trust, Greater London Authority, Thames 21 and other partners.

3.2 Management Plan:

The current version of the Welsh Harp / Brent Reservoir Management Plan, (dated 2016 but a long-term management plan) is available from Brent Council. Refer to the Action Plan (3.3).

Website links to parts of the Welsh Harp are at:

[Neasden Recreation Ground | Brent Council](#)

[Welsh Harp Open Space | Brent Council](#)

[Welsh Harp Reservoir | Brent Council](#)

### 3.3 Action Plan:

The Welsh Harp / Brent Reservoir Management Plan includes an Action Plan that lists current year progress and actions that may require a longer time - frame and/or for the resources to be identified to undertake the action. For this committee the Action Plan is updated as Appendix A. The Action Plan provides notes and updates on issues and projects, rather than listing the details in this covering report. The 'Progress' column indicates current progress.

Note that the format of the Action Plan has been simplified and is now presented without the former colour coding of progress. For Brent Council, additional notes are provided in the following paragraphs:

### 3.4 Grounds maintenance contractor:

A new grounds maintenance contract commences on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2023 for the operational works in Brent Council's parks and open spaces. This will include the Welsh Harp Open Space, Neasden Recreation Ground and Silver Jubilee Park. The contractor is Continental Landscapes Ltd.

### 3.5 Marshland work:

Previous work to manage the marshland on the shore of the Welsh Harp Open Space provided for a range of conservation, landscape and recreational (water wind sports) needs, while retaining also a variety of trees within the marshland. However, shade is continuing to reduce the marshland vegetation on the south-western shore of the reservoir alongside Neasden Recreation Ground.

### 3.6 Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre:

Brent Council's Cabinet resolved at the May 2023 meeting to approve proposals, as in the report for that Agenda, for the future of the Welsh Harp Centre as a post-16 skills resource centre for young people and young adults with special educational needs; and to enable horticulture, work experience and volunteering opportunities. There is the potential for use at other times by third sector and community organisations. Currently, Thames 21 are continuing to provide some limited services at the existing Centre.

### 3.7 Healthy Walks programme:

The walking programme continues. The Welsh Harp walks are on Thursdays from 10am to 1pm, meeting at the Welsh Harp Open Space end of Birchen Grove, Kingsbury NW9. For details please email [healthyliving@brent.gov.uk](mailto:healthyliving@brent.gov.uk)

### 3.8 Pollution incidents:

The Environment Agency were following up from late March 2023 on a recurrence of a pollution incident onto the southern side of the Brent Reservoir SSSI.

### 3.9 Riverside Connections:

A new way-marked walking route has had signage installed in both directions between Wembley Park Station and the Welsh Harp (Welsh Harp Open Space at Birchen Grove). The route extends through a mix of quieter roads and green spaces including alongside the Canal Feeder and River Brent at Quainton Street Open Space, through Chalkhill Open Space, St David's Close Open Space and Chalkhill Park. Funding was provided as part of a Brent Council NCIL (Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy). Design was provided with input by Thames 21 and then by Brent Council.

## 4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 The Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan is primarily a land-use document to guide land managers and others in the maintenance, management and legislative issues affecting the land management of the Brent Reservoir and associated land. The Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan also has a forward planning role, particularly in identifying the needs of land management over timeframes into the future.

4.2 The actions in the accompanying Action Plan (Appendix A) are achievable over varying time-frames, though many are not affordable within existing budgets in the short term. The actions will be closely monitored, prioritised and re-profiled to ensure there are existing resources available to mitigate against any possible overspends. More details of works are included in Appendix A. Where those works are not currently achievable, the Action Plan highlights key issues. Works are only undertaken when approved by the service responsible for delivering the works within existing approved budgets.

4.3 As is being reported to the Committee, the main land-holding organisations at the Welsh Harp and some other organisations are currently working on a 'vision' exercise, which will include a review of possible sources of funding and income for those works currently not affordable.

## 5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp is a designated 'Site of Special Scientific Interest' ('SSSI'). Section 28E of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 ('CROW') and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC) sets out the duties in relation to SSSIs. Land owners or occupiers, and also public bodies, are required to give notice to and consult with Natural England where they wish to carry out, or cause or permit to be carried out any operation in an area of land that is of special interest by reason of any of its flora, fauna, or geological or physiographical features (this requirement applies to operations within a SSSI, and to operations outside the SSSI that may affect the features of interest). Natural England will issue consent, which may have conditions or refuse

consent. It is a criminal offence to carry out a listed operation without Natural England's consent or to ignore any conditions of a consent which may result in an unlimited fine and a restoration order. CROW (and section 28G of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) places a duty on all public bodies to take reasonable steps, consistent with the proper exercise of the authority's functions, to further the conservation and enhancement of a SSSI. When advice is obtained from Natural England prior to carrying out the works, an explanation of how the Council has taken into account any advice Natural England has given should be provided.

The Council must be able to show that it considered alternatives that could reduce the impact on the SSSI and the methods being used are those that cause as little damage as practicable to the land.

The Council should demonstrate how it has assessed differing interests (including the special interests of the SSSI) before deciding to go ahead with the works.

- 5.2 It is good practice for landowners or occupiers to produce Management Plans for the SSSI, which when approved by Natural England, enable the carrying out of the works specified in the Management Plan. This can reduce the administrative work inherent in obtaining consent for individual items of management work.
- 5.3 The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 requires that all public authorities in England and Wales, when exercising their statutory functions, must have regard to the conservation of biodiversity, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of their functions.
- 5.4 Section 28Q of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 requires the owner of land included in a SSSI to inform Natural England within 28 days of any changes in ownership or occupation of the site, including leases, easements and rights.

## **6.0 Equality Implications**

- 6.1 Decision makers must have due regard to the public sector equality duty in making their decisions. The public sector equality duty is set out at section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and is as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

In terms of advancing equality of opportunity, this means to:

- (i) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- (ii) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- (iii) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

In terms of

- (a) Tackling prejudice, and
- (b) Promoting understanding,

The relevant protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race,
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and Civil partnership

6.2 At this stage, no potential adverse impact arising from the recommendations in this report has been identified. However, the equalities implications identified in the Equality Analysis will continue to be considered and assessed as further data / information is obtained or becomes available during the implementation process.

## **7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders**

7.1 None specific.

## **8.0 Human Resources/Property Implications (if appropriate)**

8.1 None specific.

<p><b>Peter Gadsdon</b> Corporate Director, Resident Services</p>
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## APPENDIX A. WELSH HARP / BRENT RESERVOIR MANAGEMENT PLAN: ACTION PLAN FOR 2023-2024

The Management Plan outlines the management considered necessary to sustain the Welsh Harp for wildlife, recreation, landscape, flood-control, economic and other benefits of the reservoir. These are achievable over varying time-frames, though many are not affordable in the short term.

Officers of the main land-holding organisations at the Welsh Harp and some other organisations are working on a ‘Vision’ exercise which will include a view of the future of the Welsh Harp.

The Action Plan here tracks current year progress on the existing Management Plan while also highlighting projects with a longer timeframe.

Note also the draft of a Forward Work Programme for the Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee that has been previously tabled by Barnet Council.

Progress is indicated within the text and may include the priority of the issue, risks and progress.

Action	Lead	Budget	Approximate timetable	Progress: 2023-24 to 27 <sup>th</sup> July 2023
Welsh Harp Vision	Canal and River Trust, Barnet Council, Brent Council, Thames 21, London Wildlife Trust, Greater London Authority.	Funding and/or resources for the Vision have been provided by the partner organisations.	Publication expected in late July 2023. Details for the publication timetable will be explained at the WHJCC meeting on 27 <sup>th</sup> July 2023.	Developing a vision and options for the Welsh Harp. Appointed in 2021, a consultancy has been preparing information and consulting with the local communities and others, reporting to the Vision’s Strategy Group (see list of ‘Lead’ organisations).

River Brent Catchment Management Plan – the Brent Reservoir is on the River Brent.	All; led by Environment Agency / Thames 21 / London Boroughs within the River Brent Catchment.		2011 - ongoing	River Brent Catchment Partnership Action Plan published at: see website: <a href="https://www.thames21.org.uk/catchment-partnerships/brent/">https://www.thames21.org.uk/catchment-partnerships/brent/</a>
Dam wall and reservoir: statutory responsibility to maintain dam wall, associated structures and the dam	Canal and River Trust (CRT)	Canal and River Trust	Maintain. On-Going	Dam wall and mechanism maintained to operational and statutory standards. Statutory inspection and works conducted in January to February 2021.
Maintain open water for water sports	Welsh Harp Sailing Association (WHSA)	Undertaken by volunteers of the (WHSA)	On-Going	Monitoring and actions by Welsh Harp Sailing Association.
Sailing Infrastructure: club-houses, boats, and service areas.	Sailing Clubs	Maintained by the Canal and River Trust; and by the sailing clubs.	On-going	The Welsh Harp Sailing Association and clubs maintain the water sports infrastructure.  See also Phoenix Canoe Club.
Bird hides: maintenance of the hides; the surrounding vegetation (sightlines) and habitats.	Welsh Harp Conservation Group / others		On-going	The WHCG organise winter projects at and near to the hides.



Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre	Brent Council, Thames 21		Brent Council are leading on the future of the Education Centre, while Thames 21 who have managed the Centre since January 2016, currently are maintaining a presence.	Brent Council are working on proposals for the future of the Welsh Harp Centre as a post-16 skills resource centre, with a focus on horticulture, work experience and volunteering opportunities. There is the potential for use of the site at other times by third sector and community organisations.
Allotments	Brent, West Hendon Allotment Society	Brent: refer to Allotments and Food Growing Strategy. Barnet: West Hendon Allotments are Self-Managed by the holders.	Allotments are maintained. There are some areas for biodiversity within the Dors Close Allotments.	Barnet Council: West Hendon Allotments are Self-Managed. Brent Council: Allotments Strategy: Birchen Grove Allotments and Dors Close Allotments.
Open spaces, pitches, paths, Capital Ring, and parks furniture.	Barnet, Brent	Existing maintenance resources. Barnet; and Brent public realm budgets.	On-going.	Maintenance, particularly of the well-used paths and features.
Signage; and interpretative signage.	Brent / Barnet.		In progress: 2023. Details from the C&RT.	Maintained. The Canal & River Trust are currently preparing a set of new interpretative panels.

Parks infrastructure	Brent / Barnet			<p>Parks infrastructure is checked at appropriate frequencies.</p> <p>Birchen Grove Car Park: Mini-humps installed in January 2020.</p> <p>Silver Jubilee Park Car Park: resurfaced and line-marked: January 2020.</p> <p>Cool Oak Lane Car Park: Barnet.</p>
Monitoring: wildlife, and indicators	WHCG; and public authorities.	Mainly by volunteers of WHCG.	On-going	<p>See the most recent 2021 report (published in July 2022) by the Welsh Harp Conservation Group, available on their website and via the following link:</p> <p><a href="#">Publications – Welsh Harp Conservation Group (wordpress.com)</a></p> <p>Programme of activities led by Welsh Harp Conservation Group for: refer to the website.</p>
Grasslands and cutting	Barnet, Brent	Maintenance: within existing resources. Restoration work is currently unfunded.	On-going – seasonal effects with various cutting frequencies for different types of grassland.	<p>Grasslands: A grassland maintenance schedule introduced by Brent Council across the Borough (including at Neasden Recreation Ground) from spring 2018 includes emphasis on improving biodiversity value of amenity grassland. Sown areas of bee-friendly plants were added in 2019. Cutting of these areas is usually in September or October. At Neasden Recreation Ground the grasslands complement existing rough-grassland habitats both at Neasden Recreation Ground and at the Welsh Harp Open Space.</p>

Grasslands: paths cutting	Barnet, Brent	Maintenance: within existing resources. Restoration work is currently unfunded. Current path cutting estimated at £5,000 / year.	Spring to autumn.	<p>Paths maintained but some have narrowed with scrub growth, particularly at Neasden Recreation Ground (see notes on Marshland).</p> <p>The lower grassland path at the Welsh Harp Open Space is narrow. Work in 2020 aimed at reducing encroaching scrub, but the path width could benefit from occasional cutting.</p>
Sailing and sports development	WHSA: Welsh Harp Sailing Association and constituent clubs.	Undertaken by volunteers of WHSA.	On-Going	<p>Led by the sailing and water sports clubs. Phoenix Canoe Club are working on proposed improvements to their club facilities for water sports, particularly for educational use; and for a café accessible from the Welsh Harp / Capital Ring path.</p>

Litter	Brent Council. Barnet Council. Canal & River Trust. Thames 21. Environment Agency.	Landowners: Brent Council, Barnet Council, Canal & River Trust. Leaseholders. Also much volunteer involvement.	On-going.	<p>The January to February 2021 temporary partial drawdown of the water level within the Reservoir revealed large quantities of litter, waste and alluvium (silt). Of the alluvium, the Canal &amp; River Trust have stated that the full removal is logistically beyond any resources that are currently available. Resources are focusing on removing the more accessible and the more conspicuous material and/or where removal could provide other benefits.</p> <p>The Canal &amp; River Trust mapped some of the larger items and those were subsequently removed.</p> <p>There has been much activity by the wider community to clear, where it is safe to do so; material near on the shorelines.</p> <p>During the summer and early autumn of 2021, volunteers of The Welsh Harp Group moved approximately 200 previously fly-tipped tyres from the woodland on the southern side of the Reservoir, to an open area for subsequent collection by the Canal &amp; River Trust.</p> <p>There remains, in addition to litter and rubbish in the reservoir; fly-tipped waste in the wooded wetland on the southern shore of the reservoir; and issues related to the inflow of waste on the Silk Stream and River Brent. A proportion of that waste is of materials fly-tipped into the rivers upstream.</p>
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River trash traps: at inflows of Dollis Brook, and Silk Stream	Environment Agency	Budget provided by the Environment Agency	Maintenance of Priestley Way trash screen - weekly.	<p>The Environment Agency clear accumulations of litter from the trash screens on the tributary rivers entering the reservoir, at the Silk Stream and at the River Brent.</p> <p>The Environment Agency clear and remove the material on a maintenance schedule; which for the Priestley Way (Staples Corner) trash screen is once weekly. As the screens collect waste that has been deposited in the river upstream, frequent and large quantities of waste can continue to accumulate in the river upstream of the screens. Inevitably, some smaller items will flow through the screens into the reservoir.</p>
Clean up projects	The community		On-going.	As noted above, where safe to do so, litter clean-up projects have been organized over several years by the Welsh Harp Litter Pickers and by residents near to Neasden Recreation Ground. More recently that has involved also The Friends of the Welsh Harp; and The Welsh Harp Group at Neasden Recreation Ground and other volunteers.
Bird rafts, islands. There are approximately 20 rafts.	Welsh Harp Conservation Group (WHCG)	Volunteer projects are held annually to maintain, repair or renew rafts. .	On-going. Autumn / winter.	WHCG have a programme for maintenance of bird rafts. Works are outside of the bird breeding season of March to August inclusive. Recent problems with access to the rafts for maintenance due to alluviation.
Reedbeds: remove young trees	WHCG – volunteer projects. Canal & River Trust.	Volunteer projects are held annually to maintain the reedbeds.	Remove young trees. On-going. Autumn / winter.	The Canal & River Trust reduced and removed in early 2022, some willows in the reed bed in the eastern marsh.
Reedbeds: remove young trees and marginal encroachment	Canal and River Trust	£85,000 PPL funding	Removing young trees and vegetation overhanging margins	In early 2022, The Canal & River Trust made improvements in the eastern marsh including removal of some debris and reduction of willow growth where that is causing obstructions or affecting other habitats. There is potentially more to be done.

Reedbeds: increase	All	Natural growth is encouraged, so costs are low, but need to remove young trees.	Periodic reviews as part of Biodiversity Action Plans.	Habitat maintained. Estimates from GIS aerial images suggest that the area of reedbed increased by 0.09 ha between 2008 and 2016. As at 2021 there are reedbeds on the main arm of the reservoir in the eastern marsh, on the shore of Neasden Recreation Ground near to the dam wall; and on the shore of the Welsh Harp Open Space.
Wet woodland	Canal and River Trust, Barnet, Brent	Largely self-managing.	On-going.	Largely self-managing. Rubbish noted during the water drawdown of Jan-Feb 2021 which needs to be extracted; and the possibility of some additional materials since.
Woodland	Brent, Barnet, WHCG, Canal and River Trust	Largely self-managing. Unfunded: management of woodland to increase diversity, but potential for creative use of material.		Where permanent, woodland at the Welsh Harp is largely self-managing. If resources were available, some areas could be enhanced. However, where willow and other tree species are encroaching onto other habitats, for example marshland or reedbeds, then management is required to maintain the mix of habitats, particularly at the margins of the Reservoir.

Marshland: maintain	Brent Council, Welsh Harp Sailing Association, Canal and River Trust.	Increase the extent of the marshland around the shores of the Reservoir for nature conservation, landscape, and to increase wind for water sports (by Reducing excess growth of trees).	Reduce young tree growth on shores of Neasden Recreation Ground, Welsh Harp Open Space.	<p>During the past two decades, Willow and scrub growth has exceeded the rate of management work on those sections of the shoreline with marshland habitat. Estimates from GIS aerial images suggest that the area of marshland (including fen, marsh and swamp) reduced by 0.3 ha between 2008 and 2016, due to succession to scrub woodland.</p> <p>Discussions from 2018 onwards by the Canal &amp; River Trust, the Welsh Harp Sailing Association and Brent Council, led to a consent for works from Natural England and a programme of winter works from February 2019.</p> <p>January and February 2020: Continuation of work in marshland edge by Welsh Harp Sailing Association on north shore (Welsh Harp Open Space). Works continued from September 2020 to late 2020.</p> <p>2020: Northern shore. Due to Covid restrictions, work was postponed in January to February 2021. Works have temporarily paused for discussions with partners.</p>
Marshland: increase	Brent, Barnet, Brent Catchment Partnership	Investigate sources of finance for long-term restoration of river catchment; and for flood alleviation.	Increase the extent of the marshland around the shores of the Reservoir for nature conservation, landscape, and to increase wind for water sports.	Marshland habitat at risk of scrub encroachment. See the comments for 'Marshland maintain', above.

Marshland: orchids	WHCG, Brent	Marshland work by Brent Council. Volunteer work by WHCG.	WHCG to provide information.	As for Marshland, above. Several of the species of marshland orchids present at the Reservoir would benefit from relatively open (un-shaded) situations or may have other specific requirements.
Marshland and habitats (northern arm of Reservoir)	Barnet, Barratt PLC		Restoration of shore by Phase 1 of West Hendon Redevelopment.	Refer to Barnet.  Discussions are in progress regarding other works in the northern arm of the Reservoir.
South-bank boardwalk	Canal and River Trust	Canal & Rivers Trust budget: periodic work.	As required.	The remnants of the previous boardwalk have been collected up by volunteers. A section of the original boardwalk and a small footbridge remain in place after repairs by volunteers.
Invasive species: Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed and other invasive species. Invasive species at the Welsh Harp extends also to a number of other species where growth is across paths, excessively shading marshland or causing other issues.	Canal and River Trust, Barnet Council, Brent Council	Brent Council Parks actions: Knotweed Reduced at the Brent Reservoir including at Neasden Recreation Ground; and Giant Hogweed at the Welsh Harp Open Space. Barnet Council have Reduced Knotweed near to Cool Oak Lane bridge and Giant Hogweed elsewhere.	Control of these species requires continuing attention: timely short-term control; control at the time of other works; and as part of longer term management.	On-going by Barnet Council, Brent Council, and the Canal and River Trust. The Brent River Catchment Partnership are investigating how to improve control along the whole catchment; and knowledge is shared between partners of the River Brent Catchment Partnership. Thames 21 working with Brent Council and others, have treated some Knotweed and Giant Hogweed on the River Brent section downstream of the dam wall (spring / summer 2021). There are similar projects upstream in Barnet.  Spring 2022: Brent: Control of Giant Hogweed at the Welsh Harp Open Space near to Wood Lane. Barnet: Similar work on invasive species.  Autumn 2022: Completion of control programme for Japanese Knotweed and visible Giant Hogweed between Quainton Street Open Space and the foot of the Welsh Harp dam wall.



Cool Oak Lane bridge. Cool Oak Lane bridge and Wood Lane traffic.	Barnet Highways (leading) in consultation with Brent Highways.	Barnet Council and others.	New pedestrian bridge in place.	Pedestrian footbridge alongside historic, vehicular footbridge.
West Hendon Playing Fields	Barnet Council	Barnet Council		

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