



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE WELSH HARP JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE Hosted as an online meeting (via MS Teams) by Brent, on Monday 21 July 2025 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillors:

Councillor Krupa Sheth	London Borough Brent – Chair
Councillor Rishikesh Chakraborty	London Borough Barnet – Vice Chair
Councillor Ernest Ambe Esq	London Borough Barnet
Councillor Alan Schneiderman	London Borough Barnet
Councillor Parvez Ahmed	London Borough Brent
Councillor Mary Mitchell	London Borough Brent
Councillor Arshad Mahmood	London Borough Brent

Organisations:

Ben Watt	Cool Oak Group
Leo Batten	Welsh Harp Conservation Group
John & Judy Shepherd	Welsh Harp Sailing Association
Ben Macmillan	Canal River Trust
Daniella Levene	Friends of Welsh Harp
Leila Taheri	Friends of Welsh Harp
Dianne Murphy	London Wildlife Trust.

Officers: Matthew Gunyon (LB Barnet Head of Greenspaces & Trees), Leslie Williams (LB Brent Project Officer), Harriet Duffield (LB Barnet Biodiversity and Conservation Officer) & James Kinsella (LB Brent Governance & Scrutiny Manager) and Rebecca Reid (LB Brent Governance Officer)

1. **Election of Chair and Vice-Chair 2025-26**

The Governance and Scrutiny manager (Brent Council) welcomed members of the Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee to the meeting and introduced the first order of business: the election of a Chair for the 2025/2026 municipal year.

Councillor Krupa Sheth (LB Brent) was elected as Chair and Councillor Chakraborty (LB Barnet) was elected as Vice-Chair.

2. **Apologies for Absence**

No apologies for absence were received.

3. **Declaration of interests**

There were no declarations of interests made during the meeting.

4. **Deputations (if any)**

No deputations were received.

5. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED:-

That the minutes of the previous meetings held on Thursday 20 March 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting.

6. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

7. **London Borough of Barnet - Welsh Harp Management Plan**

Matthew Gunyon (LB Barnet Head of Greenspaces & Trees) was invited to introduce a report from the London Borough of Barnet on the Welsh Harp Management Plan. An update was provided regarding ongoing fly-tipping issues at the Priestly Way end of the Welsh Harp. It was reported that a member of his team was currently leading on the matter and that collaboration was underway with the Enforcement Team to explore the feasibility of deploying CCTV in the affected area. It was noted that hazardous waste had been identified at the site and, despite ongoing clearance efforts, further waste continued to be deposited. The situation was being actively monitored, and clearance was being undertaken as swiftly as possible. Efforts were ongoing to identify a more permanent resolution in conjunction with enforcement colleagues.

Members heard that a Cabinet paper was scheduled for consideration the following day, outlining a proposed phased delivery approach for the West Hendon Playing Fields Master Plan.

It was reported that improvement works were being planned over the forthcoming 12 to 18 months in and around the Welsh Harp. These works included footpath improvements, habitat enhancement and creation, baseline data capture, and community engagement initiatives. Partnerships were being formed with the Canal & River Trust (CRT), Citizen Zoo, and The Conservation Volunteers. Further details were provided in the appendices of the associated committee report. It was also confirmed that the enforcement case concerning the development at Woolmead Avenue remained ongoing, with the Planning Team continuing to progress the matter.

The Chair thanked Matthew Gunyon for introducing the report and then moved on to invite questions and comments from the Committee in relation to the London Borough of Barnet - Welsh Harp Management Plan.

- As an initial query, Welsh Harp JCC members questioned the timeline for resolving the fly-tipping issue at Priestly Way, noting that the problem had persisted for over 10 years. In response, Matthew Gunyon (LB Barnet Head

of Greenspaces & Trees) acknowledged the longstanding nature of the issue and explained that access to the waste had posed a significant challenge. Work was underway with contractors to facilitate clearance, including the use of specialist contractors for hazardous materials. It was reiterated that the team was working to resolve the matter as quickly as possible, though a definitive timeline could not yet be provided due to access and coordination constraints. It was confirmed that the possibility of installing CCTV was being explored with an updated timeline to be provided in due course.

- Welsh Harp JCC members requested clarification on the current budget for the West Hendon Playing Fields and the scope of works to be undertaken. In response, Matthew Gunyon (LB Barnet Head of Greenspaces & Trees) advised that the budget had been reduced to approximately £3.5 million. Details were available in the Cabinet agenda scheduled for consideration the following day. The first phase of works would focus on playground equipment, sports courts, footway enhancements, and potential drainage improvements to address flooding. Future phases would consider the introduction of synthetic sports pitches and other elements, subject to funding availability.
- Following up, concern was expressed that the reduced budget might result in a less attractive redevelopment. In response, Matthew Gunyon (LB Barnet Head of Greenspaces & Trees) emphasised that the proposed improvements aimed to enhance accessibility and inclusivity, thereby encouraging greater use of the site. It was noted that increased activity in parks typically led to improved natural surveillance and reductions in anti-social behaviour, contributing to a safer environment.
- Questions were raised around whether the installation of astro turf was still planned for the West Hendon Playing Fields. In response, confirmation was provided that the synthetic pitch was currently proposed for inclusion in Phase 2 of the Master Plan. The exact location had not yet been finalised, but the current plan included one full sized synthetic football pitch. Following on from the previous question, Welsh Harp JCC members asked where the proposed pitch would be located, to which Matthew Gunyon (LB Barnet Head of Greenspaces & Trees) advised that potential locations were still under review and that no definitive location could be confirmed at this stage.
- Welsh Harp JCC members sought details around the extent to which the Silver Park Jubilee Resident Association had been consulted regarding the location, or proposed locations, for the football pitch as part of the West Hendon Playing Fields Master Plan. In response, Matthew Gunyon (LB Barnet Head of Greenspaces & Trees) informed that consultation to date had been limited to earlier discussions held during the development of the masterplan. It was clarified that no formal consultation had yet taken place regarding the specific location of the proposed pitches beyond what had been outlined in the spatial planning element of the masterplan, which identified a potential site. It was confirmed that, once a decision had been reached regarding the precise location of the pitches, the matter would be subject to the planning process. This process would include consultation with neighbouring properties and relevant sites, including Silver Jubilee Park. It was further noted that, should Barnet's Cabinet approve the proposals,

Phase 1 would proceed, and specific consultation would be undertaken in relation to the proposed playground element of the scheme.

- Queries were raised around whether the second stage of planning would include a more detailed assessment of the environmental implications associated with the installation of astro turf, particularly in relation to the Welsh Harp and its surrounding area. In response, Matthew Gunyon (LB Barnet Head of Greenspaces & Trees) confirmed that environmental considerations would be fully addressed during the planning process. It was stated that discussions had already taken place with colleagues at the Football Foundation, during which the proximity of the nature reserve and the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) had been highlighted. Assurance was provided that these factors would be carefully managed and taken into account when determining a suitable location for the proposed works.

In seeking to bring consideration of the item to a close, the Chair thanked officers and Welsh Harp JCC members for their contributions towards consideration of the London Borough of Barnet - Welsh Harp Management Plan. As a result of the outcome of the discussion, it was **AGREED** to note the update provided with the following information request identified:

INFORMATION REQUEST

- (1) That an updated timeline for resolving the fly-tipping issue at Priestly Way be provided.

8. London Borough of Brent - Welsh Harp Management Plan

Leslie Williams (LB Brent Project Officer) was invited to introduce a report from the London Borough of Brent on the Welsh Harp Management Plan. An update was provided on marshland conservation works located on the southern edge of the Welsh Harp reservoir, adjacent to Neasden Recreation Ground. It was confirmed that the works were scheduled to continue in early autumn, with project partners including the Canal & River Trust, the Welsh Harp Sailing Club, and The Conservation Volunteers.

Issues were addressed relating to site maintenance and fly-tipping. It was reported that the London Borough of Brent had experienced significant challenges with littering and fly-tipping, including incidents in the vicinity of Priestley Way. A clean-up operation had been arranged, and although signage had been installed at the site, the issue remained persistent both at Priestley Way and at other park entrances.

In relation to the new Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre, members heard that the concept design had progressed to Stage 2 and was currently under discussion with stakeholders. It was noted that further updates would follow as the design process continued. Reference was also made to the Pulley Wheel Project, and it was confirmed that the sculpture, designed by Phil Neil and commissioned by the Canal & River Trust, had been unveiled on 16 May 2025 at the Welsh Harp Sailing Association base. The sculpture was expected to be relocated to its permanent site at Neasden Recreation Ground in the autumn.

The Chair thanked Leslie Williams for introducing the report and then moved on to invite questions and comments from the Committee in relation to the London Borough of Brent - Welsh Harp Management Plan:

- Members were keen to seek details around the extent of collaboration between the London Borough of Brent and Barnet in addressing fly-tipping at Priestley Way. In response, Leslie Williams (LB Brent Project Officer) reported that both boroughs were working together as far as practicable, although each operated under distinct systems, including differing relationships with contractors and service organisations. It was noted that while clearance operations could be coordinated, preventing fly-tipping remained a more complex challenge.
- Following up, concerns were raised regarding the effectiveness of operating separate systems and whether a more unified approach might be beneficial. In response, Leslie Williams (LB Brent Project Officer) reiterated that each council had its own contractual and enforcement frameworks, and that it was most practical to work within those existing systems. Brent's efforts in pursuing enforcement actions were acknowledged with several borough-wide successes noted. In continuing the response, Matthew Gunyon (LB Barnet Head of Greenspaces & Trees) informed the JCC that both boroughs faced similar structural and resource constraints. It was explained that Barnet's operational model was designed to function borough-wide, rather than being site-specific, and that any divergence from this approach would require a reallocation of resources. It was noted that the same applied to Brent, and that merging resources for a single site would not be straightforward, given the broader responsibilities of the teams involved. A Welsh Harp JCC member suggested that, given the long-standing nature of the issue and associated costs, the boroughs might consider establishing a joint annual fund to address fly-tipping at Priestley Way. In response, the Chair explained that both councils operated under fixed contracts, which could not be amended to accommodate site-specific resource allocations. However, the Chair welcomed proposals from volunteers and organisations to apply for available grants to support relevant projects. Officers from both boroughs would be available to assist with such applications. It was confirmed that Brent and Barnet already maintained close working relationships, with regular meetings and discussions between teams. Members were invited to submit suggestions via email, which could be reviewed by the Chair and officers, and site visits could be arranged where appropriate.
- Welsh Harp JCC members requested an update on three matters - namely, pollution from outfalls from the industrial estate entering the Welsh Harp; reports of individuals removing fencing along the industrial estate and fly-tipping into the SSSI; and the creation of a footpath near the Priestley Way trash screen. In response, Leslie Williams (LB Brent Project Officer) informed the Committee that pollution from the industrial estate was being investigated by Thames Water, the Environment Agency, and several voluntary groups. Due to potential legal implications, full details were not available, but investigations were ongoing. It was further noted that during his last site visit, pollution was still present, although low water flow made it difficult to determine whether new contaminants were entering the area. Monitoring

efforts were expected to continue. Regarding the fencing, it was confirmed that Brent Council had contacted the Canal & River Trust, which owned the adjacent land. Although the site fell within the London Borough of Brent, the Council did not own the land. The Canal & River Trust had been notified and were leading on the matter. It was acknowledged that fly-tipping had occurred historically on the industrial estate and that some waste may have been displaced during recent works, with some material appearing within the SSSI. In relation to the footpath, Leslie Williams (LB Brent Project Officer) expressed that he was not aware of the specific location referenced and invited the submission of further details or a sketch map and undertook to investigate the matter.

- Welsh Harp JCC members observed that the Welsh Harp was the London Borough of Barnet's sole SSSI and expressed concern regarding the influence of administrative and contractual systems on the maintenance and protection of such a valuable ecological site. It was suggested that alternative approaches should be considered where these mechanisms were not achieving the required impact, such as the ongoing concerns relating to fly-tipping at Priestley Way with the suggestion made, as an example, of the benefits that the formation of a Trust between Brent and Barnet Councils alongside other landowners may deliver in seeking to collaboratively manage and protect the site.
- Further information regarding the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre project was sought by members. In response, Leslie Williams (Project Officer, LB Brent) advised that the new Centre was designed primarily for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) usage for young people aged post-16, with usage focused on daytime curriculum activities. It was further noted that provision would be made for others to use the facility outside of curriculum hours, thereby maximising the educational and social value of the facility. It was confirmed that the same facilities would be available for both daytime and community use. It was also stated that the architectural design would accommodate both functions, although finer details remained under development.
- Queries were raised regarding the frequency of cleaning for the two trash screens located at Priestley Way and behind Halfords. In response, Leslie Williams (Project Officer, LB Brent) reported that the trash screen at Priestley Way was cleaned fortnightly by the Environment Agency. Matthew Gunyon (Head of Greenspaces & Trees, LB Barnet) additionally clarified that both trash screens were situated within the Barnet boundary. It was explained that the trash screen on the Silk Stream side was automated, with waste collected into a skip, which was then emptied approximately every two weeks.
- The opportunity was also taken for Welsh Harp JCC members to express appreciation to Leslie Williams for his prompt response to the fly-tipping incident at Birch Grove. Gratitude was extended for his efforts in addressing the matter swiftly and effectively.

- Concerns were raised regarding the impact of road runoff, particularly from major routes surrounding the Welsh Harp such as the M1 on the River Brent and the wider SSSI. Details were therefore sought regarding the plans in place to mitigate and manage this issue. In response, Harriet Duffield (Biodiversity and Conservation Officer, LB Barnet) confirmed that the borough was actively exploring the implementation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs) in collaboration with the Highways Team. Funding bids were being prepared to support these initiatives. Dianne Murphy (London Wildlife Trust) additionally reported that preliminary results had been obtained from a collaborative project involving local river-based volunteer groups and Imperial College London. These groups had been collecting environmental samples to monitor the levels and impact of road runoff. Although detailed site-specific data were not yet available, it was acknowledged that the Welsh Harp received significant volumes of runoff, resulting in salt and pollutant accumulation behind the reservoir dam. The project was ongoing and currently focused on data collection. Daniella Levene (Friends of Welsh Harp) further noted that the sampling efforts were targeting specific chemical markers and locations, and that further work was required. It was confirmed that the project would continue into the following year.
- Following on from the issue raised earlier as part of the update, concerns were highlighted relating to the withdrawal of Thames21 from funding the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre as a result of financial losses, with queries raised about the support Brent Council had sought to provide to sustain the centre's operations, given its longstanding role in providing nature-based education to children, particularly those living in high-rise developments with limited access to green space. Concern was also expressed regarding the proposed exclusive use of the site for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision, and the potential loss of access for the wider school community.

As a further issue highlighted, questions were raised regarding the future of the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre, with specific reference to whether there were any plans to ensure that young people more broadly would continue to have opportunities to engage with nature and environmental learning. In response, Leslie Williams (Project Officer, LB Brent) confirmed that the centre was primarily intended to serve as a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) facility during curriculum hours and would be fully utilised for that purpose. However, it was noted that current plans were exploring how the same building and its rooms could be made available for alternative uses outside of core curriculum time. This could include bookings by local organisations for nature study or community-based educational activities. It was emphasised that the facility would remain an educational building, and as such, its use would be limited to activities with an educational or informational component. It was further noted that the existing Portakabin structure was in a poor state of repair, and that the proposed replacement building would represent a significant asset to the Welsh Harp area. The Chair acknowledged the collaborative efforts between the Property Team, the Climate Emergency Team, and the Parks Team, who had been working closely with partners on the development of the site.

Whilst noting the response, further concerns were expressed regarding what it was felt appeared to be the proposed exclusive use of the new Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre for SEND provision. It was noted that for over fifty years, the centre had provided valuable opportunities for children from across the borough to engage with nature. Members voiced concern that although the use of the centre would rightly support individuals with essential needs, such opportunities might now inadvertently limit opportunities for the wider school population, particularly those from high-density housing estates with limited access to green space. The Chair acknowledged the concerns expressed and advised that, regrettably, neither Thames21 nor the Council were in a position to provide further funding beyond that which had already been committed. Members of the Welsh Harp JCC were encouraged to contact the Council via email should they wish to receive a comprehensive update on the forthcoming plans. The Chair reaffirmed the Council's dedication to facilitating continued access to nature and environmental education for young people across Brent.

- Reference was made to silt testing conducted by the Canal & River Trust (CRT) in the East and North Marsh areas, which again had identified damage caused by hydrocarbons and road runoff, particularly from the M1. Queries were raised regarding the establishment of a restoration fund linked to this damage. In response, Ben Macmillan (Canal & River Trust) confirmed that silt testing in the East Marsh had returned results indicating high levels of hazardous material. Expressions of interest for restoration funding had been submitted to National Highways, with direct links established between motorway outfalls and pollution entering the reservoir by way of Dollis Brook and Silk Stream. Discussions regarding further project funding were ongoing, and evidence had been gathered to support the connection between runoff and the SSSI.

Following on, queries were raised regarding the use of hydrodynamic vortex chambers, which had been successfully deployed on the River Wandle to remove silt and pollutants from road runoff. Welsh Harp JCC members questioned whether such technology was being considered for use within the Welsh Harp catchment. In response, Ben Macmillan (Canal & River Trust) stated that remediation responsibilities lay with National Highways, and that the Canal & River Trust would not be directly involved in implementation. However, National Highways had acknowledged their potential contribution to pollution and were open to remediation of problematic outfalls. It was hoped that such measures would be pursued. Suggestions were made that hydrodynamic vortex chambers be proposed to National Highways as a preventative measure, particularly if a significant restoration fund were to be established.

- Details were sought regarding the extent to which developers involved in the West Hendon regeneration had been engaged in relation to social value funding, particularly the potential to utilise their 1% social value commitments to support initiatives at the Welsh Harp. In response, Matthew Gunyon (Head of Greenspaces & Trees, LB Barnet) advised that while the Welsh Harp had not been specifically targeted in this regard, the borough did operate a social value policy across all procurement activities. It was explained that social value commitments varied between contracts and were often tailored to specific projects or locations. The Council was currently reviewing its Themes, Outcomes and Measures (TOMs) framework to allow greater

flexibility in how social value contributions could be applied. Examples were cited relating to playground suppliers who had committed to delivering educational sessions on design and equipment, though these were not necessarily conservation focused. It was noted that some private contractors had shown interest in supporting conservation-related activities, and that this area was under active review.

In seeking to bring consideration of the item to a close, the Chair thanked officers and Welsh Harp JCC members for their contributions towards consideration of the London Borough of Brent - Welsh Harp Management Plan. As a result of the outcome of the discussion, it was **AGREED** to note the update provided with the following information request identified:

INFORMATION REQUESTS

- (1) That a progress update regarding the plans for the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre be provided to Welsh Harp JCC councillors in due course.

9. Update from the Canal & River Trust

Ben Macmillan (Canal River Trust) was invited to provide an update on from the Canal & River Trust. In presenting, details were provided on the proposed restoration works at the North Marsh of the Welsh Harp Reservoir. Plans were displayed during the meeting. It was reported that funding had been secured from the Consumer Trust, in partnership with Brent and Barnet Councils, utilising Section 106 contributions, to undertake a partial restoration of the northern marsh area. The works would primarily involve coppicing of willow trees, which had encroached upon and shaded out the reed beds that previously flourished along this stretch. In addition, dredging works were planned to restore two historical channels dating back to the 1980s. It was noted that one of the channels was currently dry and would require full dredging and reconnection to the reservoir. A second channel would also be excavated along the same stretch.

Restoration plans had evolved, and the area would be subject to comprehensive coppicing, with efforts made to remove willow stumps to prevent regrowth. Where stump removal was not feasible, eco-plug pesticide treatments would be applied to inhibit regrowth. Ben Macmillan further advised that the newly opened space would be used to establish grassland habitats, thereby enhancing the area's suitability for wetland bird species, which formed the basis of the site's SSSI designation. The total funding secured to date included £150,000 from the Consumer Trust, with match funding of £150,000 from Barnet Council, and an additional £200,000 being pursued from National Highways to support full implementation of the works.

The Chair thanked Ben Macmillan for the update and then moved on to invite questions and comments from the Committee in relation to the information provided:

- Welsh Harp JCC members welcomed the restoration initiative, noting its alignment with earlier proposals under the Future Habitats Strategy for the Welsh Harp. Enthusiasm was expressed for the project and reference was

made to previous site visit to the North Marsh with Councillor Alan Schneiderman (LB Barnet) and others, during which their views on the initiative was sought.

A follow-up query was then raised regarding the Silk Stream Bridge, which remained unbuilt despite having received planning permission over a decade ago. Concern was expressed that the proposed infrastructure posed a significant threat to the remaining areas of the North Marsh and could undermine restoration efforts. In response, Councillor Alan Schneiderman (LB Barnet) welcomed the restoration works and commended Barnet Council's contribution through match funding. In relation to the Silk Stream Bridge, it was acknowledged that planning permission had been granted some time ago and that discussions had taken place with Barratt London, although no substantial new information had been provided. A desire was expressed for Barratt London representatives to meet with members of the Welsh Harp JCC and local stakeholders to review the plans and address concerns directly.

Given concerns relating to the bridge, Welsh Harp JCC members noted that alternative routing options had previously been suggested which would avoid unnecessary damage to the SSSI. It was queried whether Barratt Homes had given these alternatives due consideration. In response, Councillor Alan Schneiderman (LB Barnet) confirmed that Barnet Council had requested Barratt London to explore alternative routes. It was acknowledged that Barratt London had indicated potential constraints, but reiterated the importance of convening a meeting where members could raise their concerns directly with Barratt London and their ecological consultants.

- A further query was raised regarding the Barnet Council's statutory powers in relation to planning permission. It was noted that the Silk Stream Bridge had received approval prior to the current administration, and reference was made to the Council's use of statutory powers to halt the Hendon Hub development. Clarification was sought as to whether similar powers could be applied in this instance. In response, Councillor Alan Schneiderman (LB Barnet) stated that the matter was not within his remit but understood that the circumstances surrounding the Silk Stream Bridge differed from those of the Hendon Hub. Welsh Harp JCC members were advised that it was not straightforward for the Council to revoke planning permission that had already been granted and suggested that the legal and procedural context was distinct in each case.
- Frustration was expressed that a public meeting for West Hendon residents regarding the Silk Stream Bridge had not yet taken place, despite previous commitments. Concern was raised about the lack of community engagement and the strength of local opposition to the proposed bridge. In response, Councillor Alan Schneiderman (LB Barnet) acknowledged concerns around the delay and confirmed that a meeting with Barratt London and their ecological consultants would be arranged to allow residents and Welsh Harp JCC members to raise questions and receive direct responses. It was further noted that the proposal would be subject to consultation and would require approval from Natural England before progressing.

Confirmation was provided that at this stage Barratt London still intended to proceed with the bridge as per the approved plans with it reiterated that this was a

matter which members could raise directly with the developer during forthcoming discussions. Reference was made to correspondence from Natural England, dated 27 March 2018, which had outlined clear objections to the proposed bridge on the grounds of its potential impact on the SSSI. A Welsh Harp JCC member suggested that this letter be revisited as part of the planned meeting to ensure full awareness of the environmental concerns previously raised.

In seeking to bring consideration of the item to a close, the Chair thanked officers and Welsh Harp JCC members for their contributions towards consideration of the Update from the Canal & River Trust. As a result of the outcome of the discussion, it was **AGREED** to note the update provided with the following action identified:

- (1) Efforts be made to convene a meeting between Barratt London, their ecological consultants, residents, and members of the Welsh Harp JCC, at which matters pertaining to the proposed Silk Stream Bridge development could be raised and discussed in detail.

10. **Date of Future Meetings**

RESOLVED:-

That the following dates for future meetings of the Joint Consultative Committee, all of which are scheduled to be held online, be noted:

- Monday 24 November 2025 at 6pm
- Thursday 19 March 2026 at 6pm

11. **Any other urgent business**

No items of urgent business were identified.

The meeting closed at 7:10PM.

COUNCILLOR KRUPA SHETH
Chair