



## Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee

**Monday 24 November 2025 at 6.00 pm**

This will be held as an online virtual meeting

### Membership:

#### Members

Councillors:

Krupa Sheth (Chair)

Rishikesh Chakraborty (Vice-Chair)

Ernest Ambe Esq

Alan Schneiderman

Andrea Bilbow

Parvez Ahmed

Mary Mitchell

Arshad Mahmood

#### Representing

London Borough Brent

London Borough Barnet

London Borough Barnet

London Borough Barnet

London Borough Barnet

London Borough Brent

London Borough Brent

London Borough Brent

### 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

Princes Park Youth Football Club

Silkstream Friends

Silver Park Jubilee Residents Association

Thames 21

Thames Water

Training Ship Broadsword

Trustee of WHCG

Welsh Harp Conservation Group

Welsh Harp Sailing Association

West Hendon Allotment Society

West Hendon Residents' Association / Friends of York Park

Baratt London

<b>For further information contact:</b> Rebecca Reid, Governance Officer Rebecca.Reid@brent.gov.uk
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### **Notes for Members - Declarations of Interest:**

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 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

Introductions, if appropriate.

Item	Page
<b>1 Apologies for Absence</b>	
<b>2 Declarations of interests</b>	
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.	
<b>3 Deputations (if any)</b>	
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	
<b>4 Minutes of the previous meeting</b>	1 - 12
To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 21 July 2025 as a correct record.	
<b>5 Matters arising</b>	
<b>6 London Borough of Barnet - Welsh Harp Management Plan</b>	13 - 18
To provide an update to the Committee in relation to Council activities during Quarter 2 (Jul-Sept 2025/26) in respect of the Welsh Harp / West Hendon Playing Fields.	
<b>7 London Borough of Brent - Welsh Harp Management Plan</b>	19 - 38
This report presents progress on the Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan since the last meeting of the Committee and during the 2025/26 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.	
<b>8 Update from the Canal &amp; River Trust</b>	Verbal Update

To receive an update from the Canal & River Trust on the ongoing restoration works within the north marsh of the Welsh Harp.

## 9 Date of Future Meetings

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

- Thursday 19 March 2026 at 6pm

## 10 Any other urgent business

- a) Thames 21: Update on Community Group Activities
- b) Cool Oak and Welsh Harp Conservation Group: Summary of views on the CRT Restoration project and Silk Stream Bridge Proposal

(Agenda republished to include this item on 17 November 2025)

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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## 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 and Clarification of Alternative Members

No apologies for absence were received.

#### 3. Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interests made during the meeting.

**4. Deputations**

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 Priestley 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

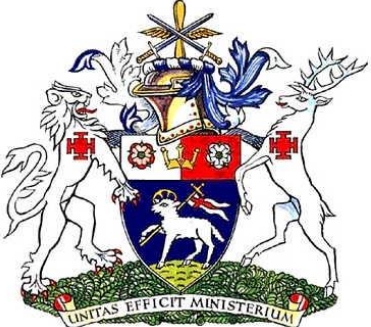
#### **11. Any Other Business**

No items of urgent business were identified.

The meeting closed at 7:10PM.

COUNCILLOR KRUPA SHETH  
Chair

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	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>24 November 2025</b></p>
<b>Title</b>	London Borough of Barnet Welsh Harp Update
<b>Report of</b>	Executive Director, Adults, Communities and Health
<b>Wards</b>	West Hendon
<b>Status</b>	Public
<b>Urgent</b>	No
<b>Key</b>	None
<b>Enclosures</b>	None
<b>Officer Contact Details</b>	Matthew Gunyon, Head of Greenspaces and Trees <a href="mailto:matthew.gunyon@barnet.gov.uk">matthew.gunyon@barnet.gov.uk</a> 0208 359 7403
<b>Summary</b>	
To provide an update to the committee in relation to Council activities during Quarter 2 (Jul-Sept 2025/26) in respect of the Welsh Harp / West Hendon Playing Fields.	

<b>Officers Recommendations</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the committee note the contents of this report.</li> </ol>

## WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 The Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee (WHJCC) is comprised of the Canal 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.
- 1.2 During Quarter 2 (Jul-Sept 2025), 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;
- 1.3 **Management and Operations**
  - 1.3.1 Barnet Council are working the Environment Agency and specialist contractors to gain access to and clear the riverside waste upstream of the Silk Stream trash screen.
  - 1.3.2 There remain consistent fly tipping issues at Priestly Way, located opposite the advertising hoarding. Waste contamination and access issues has hampered an effective response from Barnet Council, who commit to rectifying the situation within the next month. The Council relies on reporting to identify and clear fly tip. Please report any fly tipping around the Welsh Harp to [parks@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:parks@barnet.gov.uk)
  - 1.3.3 A series of volunteer litter picking events have been organised by the Friends of the Welsh Harp over the late summer/autumn period, with collection and clearance resources provided by the Council.
  - 1.3.4 The Council is a member of the Thames21 Brent Catchment Partnership and continues to work with stakeholders on the biggest issues facing the Brent River catchment, which includes the Welsh Harp. Officers attend working group meetings, such as the invasive non-native species (INNS) control group, which has recently produced an interactive map to show INNS locations and treatment plans ([www.innsmapper.org](http://www.innsmapper.org)). The long-term aim of the group is to eradicate Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed across the catchment, all of which are present at the Welsh Harp, as Schedule 9 species it is illegal to plant or allow them to spread. The Council has engaged our specialist contractor for significant additional spraying, the total area of giant hogweed spot-treated this year-to-date being 2775 square metres. Japanese knotweed treatment is in progress, with additional locations identified using INNS tracker.
  - 1.3.5 In consultation with the Friends of the Welsh Harp, Barnet Council resources have been redeployed from contractor litter picks to invasive non-native species treatment. Treatment was successful on the left bank of the Silk Stream downriver of the trash screen. Access issues prevented comprehensive treatment of the corresponding area on the right bank, which we aim to resolve spring 2026.
- 1.4 **West Hendon Playing Fields Master Plan**

- 1.4.1 The West Hendon Playing Fields project is progressing with a phased approach to delivering the masterplan, as approved by Cabinet in July 2025.
- 1.4.2 The phased approach will have an initial focus on improvements to existing facilities. Design work is continuing for access and drainage improvements. Refurbishment of the existing tennis courts, the introduction of a new 3x3 basketball court and installation of a new play area are expected to start by spring 2026, subject to seasonal conditions.
- 1.4.3 The subsequent phase is working towards the masterplan and Playing Pitch Strategy aspirations for a Sports Hub, within current budget limitations. Feasibility for a 3G pitch has been completed, in collaboration with the Football Foundation, as the initial step towards a planning application in the coming months and a subsequent funding bid.
- 1.5 **Welsh Harp and SSSI management**
  - 1.5.1 Work has commenced on the restoration of the North Marsh area of the site, a project managed by CRT and partially funded by LBB (Wings on Water). CRT to provide updates on the progress of this project.
  - 1.5.2 [The Conservation Volunteers](#) (TCV) have started their weekly habitat management sessions, Welsh Harp Wednesdays, every Wednesday from 10am – 3pm throughout winter. These sessions will focus on habitat management and enhancement work, informed by the site management plan and suggestions from key stakeholders.
  - 1.5.3 In April 2023 the Council were alerted to concerns relating to the SSSI as a result of development from a property in Woolmead Avenue. This has remained under review by the Councils Planning Enforcement team who have worked with Natural England to review and resolve matters, issuing an enforcement notice in May 2023. Subsequently a retrospective application for construction work (23/2569/RCU) was refused by the London Borough of Barnet Planning Dept. A further notice was issued in November 2023, outlining a requirement to demolish and remove materials from the property (ENF/0522/23). An appeal was issued in 29 January 2025, and the Council's decision was upheld (24/00031/ENF). An independent inspector has provided up to 29th July 2025 to comply with the terms of the enforcement notice or obtain relevant consents. On 17<sup>th</sup> October 2025, a retrospective planning application was submitted ([25/4177/RCU | Erection of a single storey rear outbuilding. \(Retrospective application\) | 38 Woolmead Avenue London NW9 7AY](#)) and is pending consideration. The Council will continue to monitor.
  - 1.5.4 The council continues to work in partnership with Brent Council, Canal and River Trust, The GLA, The London Wildlife Trust and Thames 21 in delivering the overarching Vision for the Welsh Harp, Welsh Harp Management Plan and Brent Catchment Partnership & Action Plan.
  - 1.5.5 Following the initial Member briefing on 29 May, Barratt prepared a Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and Delivery Roadmap in consultation with the LBB Regeneration team. This was finalised in July, with regular updates provided as work has progressed.

- A Socio-Economic review confirmed the continued need for the bridge to enable provision of play space in line with original planning requirements.
- A second Member briefing was held on 28 August to share progress and gather input.
- Ongoing engagement has taken place with key stakeholders, including:
  - Designing Out Crime Officers (DOCO)
  - LBB Greenspaces and Planning Officers
  - Natural England
  - Canal & River Trust (CRT)

Next steps include:

- A Design Team Meeting with LBB Greenspaces, DOCO, LBB Regeneration Officers, and consultants to refine proposals and ensure alignment with the West Hendon Playing Fields.
- A follow-up meeting with Planning Officers to review refined proposals.
- Preparation of a Councillor update, alongside a resident newsletter and project website, which will provide information on proposals, next steps, and an opportunity for feedback.

## **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**

- 5.1.1 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.

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

- 5.2.1 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.

### 5.3 Social Value

- 5.3.1 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.

### 5.4 Legal and Constitutional References

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

- 5.4.2 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.

### 5.5 Risk Management

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

### 5.6 Equalities and Diversity

- 5.6.1 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

**5.7 Corporate Parenting Principles**

5.7.1 N/A

**5.8 Consultation and Engagement**

5.8.1 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.

**5.9 Insight**

5.9.1 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](#)

6.5 [West Hendon Playing Fields Masterplan Update – Cabinet 22 July 2025, Agenda Item 22](#)



	<b>Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee</b> 24 November 2025
	<b>Report from the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Regeneration</b>
	<b>Lead Cabinet Member: Councillor Krupa Sheth</b>
<b>Welsh Harp Management Plan update (Brent)</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>List of Appendices:</b>	<b>Appendix A - Welsh Harp / Brent Reservoir Management Plan: Action Plan for 2025-2026.</b>
<b>Background Papers:</b>	
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Leslie Williams, Project Officer, Parks Services, Brent Civic Centre. Email: <a href="mailto:Leslie.Williams@Brent.gov.uk">Leslie.Williams@Brent.gov.uk</a> Tel: 020 8937 5628

## 1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report presents progress on the Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan since the last meeting of the Committee and during the 2025/26 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 Members are asked to note the Report.

## 3.0 Detail

### 3.1

#### Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

- 3.1.1 This report updates members on the issues and progress for the Welsh Harp area. These relate to the Borough Plan Priorities. The Welsh Harp contributes

to the priority of A Cleaner Greener Future and also to some of the other priorities. The Welsh Harp provides publicly accessible green space, opportunities for water sports, space for recreational exercise, habitats and biodiversity, contributes to flood control within and beyond the Brent area; and provides a landscape to enhance the surrounding residential, community and commercial neighbourhoods. The Welsh Harp contributes to strategies including the:

Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy 2021-23

Flood Risk Management Strategy

Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2027.

Further details of these and of other strategies can be found at:

<https://www.brent.gov.uk/the-council-and-democracy/strategies-priorities-and-policies>

## **3.2 Background**

### **3.2.1 Welsh Harp 'Vision':**

The 'Welsh Harp Vision' was published in July 2023. 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. The partner organisations remain in contact and several of the projects mentioned below and in the Action Plan appendix involve partnership working.

### **3.2.2 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 (3.2.3).

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](#)

### **3.2.3 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 actions. For this committee the Action Plan is updated as Appendix A. The Action Plan provides notes and updates on issues and projects. The 'Progress' column indicates current progress.

### **3.2.4 Marshland work:**

Following the seasonal end of the bird breeding season, work has recommenced on the woodland management in the marshland on the southern edge of the Reservoir, alongside and/or at Neasden Recreation Ground. The project is led by the Canal & River Trust, The Conservation Volunteers, Welsh Harp Sailing Association and Brent Council Parks. The works have a consent from Natural England. The work has focused on reducing scrub tree growth where it is out-shading the marshland habitat. A variety of trees are being retained. Currently a section of the reservoir edge footpath has been partially reopened to light, while at the same time enhancing views of and across the reservoir. There should also be some reduction in the wind shadow across the water near to the shore.

### 3.2.5 The Conservation Volunteers

The Conservation Volunteers have continued a two-year programme of events in Brent, focused on parks and other sites that have, to date, received only limited or no conservation volunteer activity. Seasonal works continued at Neasden Recreation Ground during the summer of 2025.

### 3.2.6 Maintenance:

Grounds maintenance continues with the parks' grounds maintenance contractor, Krinkels Ltd. The annual meadow areas at Neasden Recreation Ground were cut and collected by mid-September 2025.

### 3.2.7 Fly-tipping and littering

The issues of littering and fly-tipping have continued, for example, towards the west of Neasden Recreation Ground. At that location enquiries have been received from the public and a Councillor. As at late October 2025, the Council's grounds maintenance contractor was planning a clean-up of the fly-tipping in that area. Concerns and issues about litter and fly-tipping in parks can be reported on the FixMyStreet app, which also provides for photographs to be provided at the same time. The Council can also be contacted by email or other contact options.

### 3.2.8 Welsh Harp Centre:

The Centre is expected to provide opportunities for young people aged 16+ with SEND during curriculum time, with provision for community use at other times. The provision for young people with SEND will focus on developing vocational skills, such as skills in horticulture, as well as offering opportunities to better prepare Brent's young people with SEND for adulthood.

In respect of the building programme the stage 2 design has now been approved. The Council's project team has a pre-planning application meeting scheduled in November with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to outline the current design and obtain feedback. The LPA feedback and consultation with a wide range of stakeholders will influence the next stage of spatial design.

In terms of provision, Brent Council's, Children, Young People & Community Development team are currently recruiting a staff member who will have oversight of the Welsh Harp Centre including curriculum development and liaison with community groups. It is expected that the post holder will start in January 2026.

#### 3.2.9 Healthy Walks programme:

The walking programme continues. The Welsh Harp walks are on Thursdays from 10am to 11am, meeting at the Welsh Harp Open Space end of Birchen Grove, Kingsbury NW9. For details, please see the walking website at:

[Walking for Health - Welsh Harp | Brent Council](#)

#### 3.2.10 Pollution incidents

Refer to the Environment Agency. Monitoring is in progress at one site with the involvement of the River Brent Catchment Partnership and the Clean Up the River Brent group.

#### 3.2.11 Pulley Wheel sculpture

The Canal & River Trust sculpture is expected to be moved to its permanent position at Neasden Recreation Ground in or after the late autumn of 2025. The sculpture, celebrating the industrial heritage of the reservoir, its wildlife and value for recreation was unveiled in May 2025. Details are available by using the reference 25/0281 on the Brent Council Planning Applications webpages or the link below:

[https://pa.brent.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=DCAPR\\_171930](https://pa.brent.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=DCAPR_171930)

#### 3.2.12 Invasive species

Brent Council Parks Service has continued to control Giant Hogweed and Oak Processionary Moth at the Welsh Harp Open Space. In early September 2025, Barnet Council and Brent Council officers hosted an on-site meeting at the Welsh Harp of the London Invasive Species Initiative. This involved sharing our local experience of invasive species control while also learning from other London Boroughs and other organisations.

#### 3.2.13 Investigatory works on the dam wall

Brent Council are enabling access, via Neasden Recreation Ground for the Canal & River Trust and their contractors, to conduct some tests on the dam wall infrastructure. The works are expected to commence in late October / early November 2025 and continue to the end of 2025.

### 3.2.14 Interpretation

Brent Council Parks Service are preparing some interpretative maps for some of the Welsh Harp Park entrances currently without maps.

The Canal & River Trust are working on interpretation signage for their interpretative locations at the reservoir

Brent Council Parks Service are investigating the reduction of scrub around the interpretative point at the Welsh Harp Open Space, to re-open some of the view/s towards the reservoir.

### 3.2.15 Biodiversity habitat land bank

Through Brent's NCIL (Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy) funding, a portion has been allocated to explore the creation of a habitat bank at Neasden Recreation Ground. A scoping exercise is currently underway to assess the feasibility of this initiative. This includes thorough due diligence and a detailed financial assessment to ensure the viability and sustainability of the project before any formal commitment is made. An update on progress will be provided in early 2026.

## 4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 4.1 The Safeguarding, Partnership and Strategy, with the Property and Assets teams of Brent Council are conducting consultation relating to the Welsh Harp Centre.

The Welsh Harp Education Centre Project stakeholder engagement is outlined above in paragraph 3.2.8. Officers are in the process of finalising a communications strategy for the project. This will include actions to inform ward members; local residents and other relevant, interested parties as to the development of the new education centre.

## 5.0 Financial Considerations

- 5.1 The Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan serves primarily as a land-use document, intended to guide land managers and other stakeholders in relation to the maintenance, management, and legislative considerations affecting the Brent Reservoir and its surrounding areas. It also plays a forward-planning role by outlining potential land management needs over the longer term.
- 5.2 The actions set out in the accompanying Action Plan (Appendix A) reflect a range of potential activities that could be delivered over varying timeframes, subject to resource availability and service-level approval. All proposals will be monitored, reviewed, and re-profiled as necessary to align with available

resources. No works will proceed without the necessary approval from the relevant service and confirmation that suitable budget provision is in place.

- 5.3 As noted in the update to the Committee, the principal land-owning organisations at the Welsh Harp, along with other stakeholders, are engaging in a 'vision' exercise. This will explore long-term aspirations and consider potential funding and income opportunities to support currently unfunded priorities, subject to further review.

## **6.0 Legal Considerations**

- 6.1 Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp is a designated 'Site of Special Scientific Interest ('SSSI').

- 6.2 SSSIs are sites which are designated by Natural England (for sites in England) and given legal protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act ('WCA') 1981 because they are recognised as being of special interest by reason of their flora, fauna, geological or physiological features.

- 6.3 There are two main types of duty that arise under the WCA 1981 in relation to sites that are designated as SSSIs.

- 6.4 For owners/occupiers:

- 6.4.1 There is a requirement to give prior notification (under section 28E, WCA 1981) before carrying out any operations that are specified by Natural England (as part of the SSSI designation) as requiring notification to be given. The owner/occupier cannot lawfully carry out any such operation unless Natural England has given their written consent, or the operation is carried out under the auspices of a management agreement made under one of the applicable statutory provisions or under a management scheme arising under section 28 of the WCA 1981. Failure to comply may result in the commission of an offence.

- 6.5 For various types of public body (including local authorities):

- 6.5.1 When such bodies are exercising their functions in a way that is likely to affect the flora, fauna or geological or physiographical features by reason of which the site is an SSSI, they have a statutory duty (under WCA 1981, section 28G) to take reasonable steps, consistent with the proper exercise of their functions, to further the conservation and enhancement of the relevant flora, fauna or geological or physiographical features. This is a broad duty and is triggered when the features relevant to the site's designation are likely to be affected.

- 6.5.2 Public bodies are also required (under WCA 1981, section 28H) to give notice to Natural England before they carry out, in the exercise of their

functions, operations likely to damage any of the flora, fauna or geological or physiographical features by reason of which an SSSI is of special interest. It is important to note that this duty also applies where the operations would not take place on land or other feature that is itself included in an SSSI; the issue is the likelihood of damage to the relevant features arising from the proposed operations. In response to receiving notification, Natural England may assent (either with or without conditions) or refuse assent; if no response is received within 28 days, they are taken to have refused assent.

- 6.5.3 Where Natural England do not assent, or the authority proposes to carry out the operations otherwise than in accordance with the terms of the assent, the authority must not carry out the operations, unless they have notified Natural England of the date on which they propose to start the operations, and how, if at all, they have taken account of any written advice received. When carrying out the operations the authority must carry these out in such a way as to give rise to as little damage as is reasonably practicable in all the circumstances to the flora, fauna or geological or physiographical features which cause the site to be of special interest. Account must be taken of any advice that has been received from Natural England. There is also an obligation to restore the site to its former condition, so far as is reasonably practicable, if damage does occur.
- 6.5.4 A parallel duty arises (under WCA 1981, section 28I) where the public body is responsible for authorising or permitting a third party to carry out operations which are likely to damage any of the features causing the site to have been designated, again including where those operations would not themselves be within the SSSI. The public body is obliged to consult with Natural England before deciding whether to give permission for the operations to be carried out, and a similar process applies to that described above if Natural England advises against permitting the operations.
- 6.6 The Action Plan 2024-25 that is the subject of the present report notes various matters relating to WCA duties in relation to an SSSI (see, for example, the entry under 'marshland: maintain' to a programme of works for the southern shore consented by Natural England).
- 6.5 The status of a site as an SSSI is also relevant in the event of a planning application being received for development. In these circumstances, the local planning authority dealing with an application will need to ensure that it complies with all relevant notification requirements and applies any applicable national and borough level planning policies relating to SSSIs.
- 6.6 Since 1 January 2023, bodies including local authorities are under a statutory duty, introduced originally by the Environment Act 2021, to conserve and enhance biodiversity. This is envisaged as a proactive duty, rather than simply a duty to have regard to the objective of conserving and enhancing

biodiversity. Active management of resources such as Brent Reservoir/Welsh Harp may contribute towards the meeting of that duty.

## **7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations**

- 7.1 As this report provides a general update, there are no immediate EDI implications.
- 7.2 The Public Sector Equality Duty, as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have “due regard” to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who have a “protected characteristic” and those who do not share that protected characteristic. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 7.3 Having due regard involves the need to enquire into whether and how a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic and the need to consider taking steps to meet the needs of persons who share a protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it. This includes removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- 7.4 At this stage, no potential adverse equality impact arising from the activities in this report have been identified. However, the equalities implications identified in the Equality Impact Assessment will continue to be considered and assessed as further data / information is obtained or becomes available during the implementation process. The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) relating to Brent Council’s activities outlined in these reports, particularly in respect of the Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plans is in the process of being updated.

## **8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations**

- 8.1 The Brent Reservoir, whilst originally constructed as part of a waterways transport system, now has a role in managing the flow of the River Brent. The Reservoir has a number of in-built systems and associated procedures that help to reduce the risk of flooding to the urban communities downstream, during and following high-rainfall events.



- 8.2 The Brent Reservoir and the wider Welsh Harp area have important roles in the conservation of biodiversity. The Brent Reservoir is a Site of Special Scientific Interest on account of the significance of its wildlife.

## **9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)**

## **10.0 Communication Considerations**

- 10.1 The Welsh Harp 'Vision', healthy living initiatives and the provision of information about the Welsh Harp have been mentioned in this report.

***Jehan Weerasinghe***

Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and  
Regeneration

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## APPENDIX A - WELSH HARP / BRENT RESERVOIR MANAGEMENT PLAN: ACTION PLAN FOR 2025-2026

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 timeframes, though many are not affordable in the short term.

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

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

Action	Lead	Budget	Approximate timetable	Progress: 2025-26 to 13 <sup>th</sup> November 2025
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.	Published in late July 2023.	A vision and possible options for the Welsh Harp.
Implementation of the Welsh Harp Vision	Canal and River Trust, Barnet Council, Brent Council, Thames 21, London Wildlife Trust, Greater London Authority.	The Vision team are investigating potential grant sources. The first is a potential application to the Heritage Lottery Fund.	On-going	Opportunities to include the Welsh Harp in grant applications are reviewed. One application that involves, but is not centered on the Welsh Harp, is currently in preparation by one of the partner 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.		Ongoing since 2011.	River Brent Catchment Partnership Action Plan published at: <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	Works: October 2023 to May 2024.	Dam wall and mechanism maintained to operational and statutory standards. Statutory inspection and works conducted in January to February 2021. Works, involving pre-drawdown of the Reservoir, October 2023 and reservoir refilled by late May 2024.
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 Centre	Brent Council, Thames 21		Brent Council are leading on the future for an Education Centre, while Thames 21 are currently maintaining a presence.	Refer to: Brent Council Cabinet, May 2023 report. Consultation discussions with local organisations: June 2024. Refer to the update in the reports to the Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee. Brent Council (Children, Young People & Community Development) are recruiting for a staff member to have oversight, expected from January 2026, of the Welsh Harp Centre including of curriculum development and liaison with community groups. The timescales for the construction of the building are to be determined.
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.		The C&RT have a series of interpretative signs in design.	Maintained. Loss of interpretative viewing point and panels at Neasden Recreation ground, due to vandalism in April 2024. Preparations are in progress by the Canal & River Trust for the installation of a sculpture.

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>
Monitoring: wildlife, and indicators	WHCG; and public authorities.	Mainly by volunteers of WHCG.	On-going	<p>See the most recent available, for 2022 (published in June 2023) 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 2018 includes emphasis on improving the 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. There are also rough-grassland habitats both at Neasden Recreation Ground and at the Welsh Harp Open Space. Late 2024: some local additional seeding by The Conservation Volunteers towards the western part of Neasden Recreation Ground.</p>
Grasslands: paths cutting	Barnet, Brent	Maintenance: within existing resources. Restoration work is currently unfunded.	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.</p>

Sailing and sports development	WHSA: Welsh Harp Sailing Association and constituent clubs.	Undertaken by volunteers of WHSA.	On-Going	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.
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>Several clean-ups have been organized since January 2021. The Canal &amp; River Trust have cleared some larger items from the reservoir, while the C&amp;RT and community organisations have held several clean-up events of the margins of the reservoir. During the de-watering of the reservoir from late 2023 into early 2024, litter other waste materials were cleared from some margins of the reservoir.</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. The river-borne waste is almost entirely litter and fly-tipped waste from the river catchment upstream.</p> <p>The clearing of litter and fly-tipping in the public open spaces of the Welsh Harp is a responsibility of the grounds maintenance contractors of either Barnet or Brent Council. Or of the Canal &amp; River Trust. For Brent, issues can be reported using the FixMyStreet app, but please select 'Parks' on the first set of options which takes the user to a dedicated page for parks.</p>

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 and fly-tipping 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 fortnightly. 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. That is what the screens were designed to do. Inevitably, some smaller items will flow through the screens into the reservoir.</p> <p>The Environment Agency have issued, from August 2024, new advice that only trained and authorized personnel, should access the trash screen within the fenced enclosure.</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; The Welsh Harp Group at Neasden Recreation Ground; and Clean Up the River Brent group.
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. Since February 2025, scrub trees are being removed from where they are shading the western reedbed at Neasden Recreation Ground.



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.
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. 2023: C&RT works to create alcoves in the reedbed in the Eastern Marsh.
Wet woodland	Canal and River Trust, Barnet, Brent	Largely self-managing.	On-going.	Largely self-managing. Quantities of fly-tipping remain to be extracted.
Woodland	Brent, Barnet, WHCG, Canal and River Trust	Largely self-managing. Un-funded: 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, reedbeds or some grasslands, then management is needed 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 much of the past three 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 to 2021.</p> <p>For the southern shore, a programme of works was detailed by the C&amp;RT Ecologist in early 2024 (and previously consented by Natural England). The Canal &amp; River Trust, Brent Council, the Welsh Harp Sailing Association; and The Conservation Volunteers re-commenced work on the southern shore (Neasden Recreation Ground) in January-February 2025. For 2025-26, works recommenced in September 2025. .</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 and other marshland plants	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 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. Thames21 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 and Barnet: Control of Giant Hogweed at the Welsh Harp Open Space near to Wood Lane.  Autumn 2023: Completion of Riverside Connections control programme for Japanese Knotweed and visible Giant Hogweed between Quainton Street Open Space and the foot of the Welsh Harp dam wall.  2024-2025: Giant Hogweed: Control commissioned by Brent Council Parks, particularly downstream at sites towards Alpertown.

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 re-development	Barnet Council, Barratts.	Barnet Council		Refer to Barnet Council update.
West Hendon Playing Fields	Barnet Council	Barnet Council		Refer to Barnet Council update.