

## MINUTES OF THE WELSH HARP JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

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

### Members Present (in remote attendance):

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

### 1. Minutes of the previous meeting

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

### 2. Absence of Members

No apologies for absence received.

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

None.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**ACTION: LEWIS ELMES**

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

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

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

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

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

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

Future events taking place include:

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

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

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

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

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

**ACTION: MR GUNYON**

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

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

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

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

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

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

**8. Any other business**

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

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

The meeting closed at 8.06pm

Councillor Anne Clarke  
Chair