



Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee

27 July 2023

Title	London Borough of Barnet Welsh Harp Update
Report of	Executive Director, Adults, Communities and Health
Wards	West Hendon
Status	Public
Urgent	No
Key	None
Enclosures	None
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Summary

To provide an update to the committee in relation to Council activities during Quarter 1 (Apr-June 2023) in respect of the Welsh Harp / West Hendon Playing Fields.

Officers Recommendations

1. That the Committee note the contents of the report.

1.1 **WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED**

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

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

1.4 **Management and Operations**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.12 West Hendon Playing Fields Master Plan

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

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

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

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

1.17 Welsh Harp and SSSI Management

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

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

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

Full update is subject to a separate agenda item.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

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

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

3.1 N/A

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

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

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

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

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

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

5.4 Social Value

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

5.5 Legal and Constitutional References

- 5.5.1 The Local Authority has a statutory duty under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to safeguard, protect and enhance sites of special scientific interest. The Local Authority has the power under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to acquire, declare and manage nature reserves. However, English Nature must be consulted by the Authority in the use of the powers given by section 21. The 1949 Act states that a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) must be managed in such as a way to ensure that use of the site does not result in any damage to its natural features.

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

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

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

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

5.6 Risk Management

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

5.7 Equalities and Diversity

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

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

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

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

5.8 Corporate Parenting Principles

5.8.1 N/A

5.9 Consultation and Engagement

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

5.10 Insight

5.10.1 None.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1 The Welsh Harp Management Plan can be found on Brent Council's website: www.brent.gov.uk/parks 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](#)