



Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee

23 November 2023

Title	London Borough of Barnet Welsh Harp Update
Report of	Executive Director for Communities, Adults, 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 2 & 3 (July-Nov 2023) in respect of the Welsh Harp / West Hendon Playing Fields.

Officers Recommendations

1. That the committee notes the contents of this report.

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

1.1 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.

1.2 During July – Nov 2023 (Quarter 2 & 3), 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 There has been one reported illegal encampment during this period and is currently under investigation. 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.

1.3.2 An area was reported and identified as being used to grow illegal substances. It was investigated by the Community Safety Team and Police and all illegal material was removed from site.

1.3.3 A new Volunteer Handbook with associated risk assessments has been released to the Barnet Green Spaces Network. We are actioning feedback to inform an updated version, but in the meantime following the processes outlined in that document should ensure volunteering work conducted on London Borough of Barnet land is safe and covered by the Councils insurance.

1.3.4 The councils Community Safety Team were commissioned to deliver weekend patrols in a number of parks and open spaces over the summer period. The patrols were intelligence led and sites were included within the patrol based on known issues and reporting, the Welsh Harp and West Hendon Playing Fields fell within the patrol sites list. We are currently reviewing the data collected from the patrols and this will be used to inform a decision around the possibility of future deployments.

1.3.5 Contractors Maydencroft are undertaking survey work to inform the proposed extension of the West Hendon Allotments into their disused tenanted land. The scope of the project 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.

1.3.6 Following the contractor litter pick of July 2023 Barnet Council have arranged contractors to undertake a winter deep clean of the site in January 2024; focusing on the site's paths and areas of congregation. The Barnet Greenspaces Team are working with CRT to aid litter removal during the reservoir draw down and have contacted

Natural England to investigate options to mitigate bankside litter around the Silkstream trash screen.

1.3.7 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 continue to attend regular meetings 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.

1.3.8 We continue to work with Thames21 and the members of the Brent Catchment Partnership on catchment-wide projects such as the London Water Vole Recovery Program with ZSL and WRT. We are currently scoping survey locations at the Welsh Harp for American mink and water voles as part of this research, funded by the Mayor's Rewild London Fund.

1.4 **Parks and Openspaces Strategy and Local Nature Recovery**

1.4.1 The Council continues to work towards developing a New Parks and Openspaces Strategy in partnership with Land Use Consultants. Following the last meeting of the Welsh Harp Joint Consultive Committee on 23 July 2023, the Committee are asked to note that a SINC review is underway in order to assess the baseline conditions of each SINC site that will lead to recommendations for changes in the level of designation, potential to extend the boundaries of the SINC sites to include adjacent habitats, and identification of opportunities to enhance the SINC network. Twelve SINC sites have been completed to date and it should be further noted that more sites shall be assessed in the spring of 2024. A desk-based review will soon commence so that the Council can collect and review baseline data this will include the field survey involving habitat mapping and assessment of SINC criteria in accordance with best practice methods and the GiGL data standards.

1.4.2 The Council plan to conduct a consultation exercise in the new year and will encourage, welcome, and appreciate the views of the Membership of the Welsh Harp Joint Consultive Committee.

1.5 **West Hendon Playing Fields Master Plan**

1.5.1 Engagement Launch: Barnet Council, in collaboration with design partners Ove Arup & Partners, has initiated the first phase of public engagement for the West Hendon Playing Fields redevelopment.

1.5.2 Engagement Strategy & Plan Development: A comprehensive engagement strategy and plan were meticulously developed over several months. Input from key stakeholders and Members was solicited during the strategy development. Final approval for the engagement plan has been successfully obtained.

- 1.5.3 The first two formal community engagement activities took place in November 2023; These activities aim to actively involve the community in informing the design development for the playing fields.

Date: 15th November 2023, Venue: Barnet Multicultural Community Centre.

Date: 18th November 2023, Venue: Birchen Grove Garden Centre

- 1.5.4 Online Engagement Platforms: Engage Barnet and Commonplace have launched engagement platforms for the West Hendon Playing Fields project. Community members can actively participate and provide input through various tools, including: Survey, Interactive map and Memory map for sharing thoughts and experiences.

[Have Your Say Today - West Hendon Playing Fields - Commonplace](#)
[West Hendon Playing Fields community engagement | Engage Barnet](#)

- 1.5.5 Statutory Consultations: Statutory consultation meetings which have been conducted with key entities so far: Metropolitan Police, Natural England, Sport England. Ongoing consultations are in place to ensure comprehensive engagement with relevant authorities.

1.6 **Welsh Harp and SSSI management**

- 1.6.1 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. We are finalising a revised weekly bin collection and litter picking schedule, augmented by a contractor deep clean in January 2024.

- 1.6.2 We are also investigating options to replace the public bird hide with a solution which makes the location less attractive for anti-social use.

- 1.6.3 The council has been consulting with the CRT to assist with the community volunteer days in November 2023 after the winter work and dewatering has commenced.

- 1.6.4 Damage to the SSSI caused by development on neighbouring properties was reported to the Council by members of the WHCG in April 2023. The Planning Enforcement Team are working with Natural England to resolve the issues and served enforcement notices to the address in May 2023. In August, a retrospective application for the construction work (23/2569/RCU) was refused by the London Borough of Barnet Planning Department. On the week commencing 13th November 2023, Barnet Planning Enforcement served a notice to the property owner requiring the demolition of the outbuilding and the removal of the constituent materials from the property within four months of the date of the notice. LBB will continue to monitor to ensure this is done and no further damage is done to the SSSI.

- 1.6.5 The council continues to work in partnership with Brent Council, Canals, and Rivers Trust, The GLA, The London Wildlife Trust and Thames 21 in delivering the overarching Vision for the Welsh Harp and updating the existing Management Plan.

The CRT are leading on two bids to the NHLF and are working closely with Barnet and Brent on the EOI submission. We are also looking at other sources of external funding to deliver the 'Vision,' for example the Mayor of London Rewild London Fund.

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 1.4 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 conducted according to the management plan and considers 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 landowners, 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 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](#)