



## Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee

23 November 2023

### Report from the Corporate Director of Resident Services

## Welsh Harp Management Plan

<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>No. of Appendices:</b>	One: Appendix A - Welsh Harp/Brent Reservoir Management Plan: Action Plan for 2023-2024
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Leslie Williams, Project Officer, Parks Services, Brent Council Email: <a href="mailto:Leslie.Williams@Brent.gov.uk">Leslie.Williams@Brent.gov.uk</a> Tel: 020 8937 5628

### 1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report presents progress on the Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan since the last meeting of the Committee and during the 2023/24 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 and Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities

3.1 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.

### 3.2 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 (3.3).

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](#)

### 3.3 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 action. For this committee the Action Plan is updated as Appendix A. The Action Plan provides notes and updates on issues and projects, rather than listing the details in this covering report. The 'Progress' column indicates current progress.

### 3.4 Grounds maintenance contractor:

A new grounds maintenance contract commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2023 for the operational works in Brent Council's parks and open spaces. This includes the Welsh Harp Open Space, Neasden Recreation Ground and Silver Jubilee Park. The contractor is Continental Landscapes Ltd.

### 3.5 Marshland work:

A site meeting was held with officers of the Canal & River Trust in early October 2023 as to options to re-start work to manage the growth of scrub on the marshland of the shores alongside Neasden Recreation Ground. Previous work to manage the marshland on the shore of the Welsh Harp Open Space provided for a range of conservation, landscape and recreational (water wind sports) needs, while retaining also a variety of trees within the marshland. However, shade is continuing to reduce the marshland vegetation on the south-western shore of the reservoir alongside Neasden Recreation Ground.

### 3.6 Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre:

Officers of Brent Council are working to consider the potential details for a Welsh Harp Centre to replace the current portacabin building. This follows a decision by Brent Council's Cabinet in May 2023 to approve proposals, as in the report for that Agenda, for the future of the Welsh Harp Centre as a post-16 skills resource centre for young people and young adults with special educational needs; and to enable horticulture, work experience and volunteering opportunities. There is the potential for use at other times by third sector and community organisations. Currently, Thames 21 are continuing to provide some limited services at the existing Centre.

### 3.7 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 email [healthyliving@brent.gov.uk](mailto:healthyliving@brent.gov.uk)

### 3.8 Brent Reservoir de-watering:

The Canal & River Trust will probably elaborate during their report, but they ask us to emphasise the need to keep out of the reservoir, during the de-watering from mid-November 2023 until the end of February 2024. The reservoir water-level is being reduced to enable works on the dam wall and associated mechanisms, while the low water level will enable works on some marginal areas particularly in the eastern marsh. The reservoir contains varying depths of alluvium ('mud') which can be dangerous to attempt to walk upon. The Canal & River Trust are providing signage around the reservoir. For those who may wish to be involved in the clean-up of the reservoir, the Canal & River Trust are providing information about organised projects on their website and contact information regarding the reservoir.

### 3.9 Pollution incidents:

Refer to the Environment Agency. A fly-tip on the southern side of the Welsh Harp is being investigated by the Canal & River Trust.

### 3.10 Priestley Way Trash Screen:

The Environment Agency attend the Priestley Way screen on a fortnightly basis to use a grab lorry to clear the screen. The Environment Agency have requested a reminder that other than of their trained teams, there should be no accessing of the trash screen beyond the fence and gate into the trash screen area. Signage is provided on the screen's exterior fence.

## 4.0 Financial Considerations

4.1 The Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan is primarily a land-use document to guide land managers and others in the maintenance, management and legislative issues affecting the land management of the Brent Reservoir and associated land. The Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan also has a forward planning role, particularly in identifying the needs of land management over timeframes into the future.

4.2 The actions in the accompanying Action Plan (Appendix A) are achievable over varying timeframes, though many are not affordable within existing budgets in the short term. The actions will be closely monitored, prioritised and re-profiled to ensure there are existing resources available to mitigate against any possible overspends. More details of works are included in Appendix A. Where those works are not currently achievable, the Action Plan highlights key issues. Works are only undertaken when approved by the service responsible for delivering the works within existing approved budgets.

4.3 As is being reported to the Committee, the main land-holding organisations at the Welsh Harp and some other organisations are currently working on a 'vision' exercise, which will include a review of possible sources of funding and income for those works currently not affordable.

## **5.0 Legal Considerations**

- 5.1 Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp is a designated 'Site of Special Scientific Interest' ('SSSI'). Section 28E of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 ('CROW') and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC) sets out the duties in relation to SSSIs. Land owners or occupiers, and also public bodies, are required to give notice to and consult with Natural England where they wish to carry out, or cause or permit to be carried out any operation in an area of land that is of special interest by reason of any of its flora, fauna, or geological or physiographical features (this requirement applies to operations within a SSSI, and to operations outside the SSSI that may affect the features of interest). Natural England will issue consent, which may have conditions or refuse consent. It is a criminal offence to carry out a listed operation without Natural England's consent or to ignore any conditions of a consent which may result in an unlimited fine and a restoration order. CROW (and section 28G of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) places a duty on all public bodies to take reasonable steps, consistent with the proper exercise of the authority's functions, to further the conservation and enhancement of a SSSI. When advice is obtained from Natural England prior to carrying out the works, an explanation of how the Council has taken into account any advice Natural England has given should be provided –

The Council must be able to show that it considered alternatives that could reduce the impact on the SSSI and the methods being used are those that cause as little damage as practicable to the land:

The Council should demonstrate how it has assessed differing interests (including the special interests of the SSSI) before deciding to go ahead with the works.

- 5.2 It is good practice for landowners or occupiers to produce Management Plans for the SSSI, which when approved by Natural England, enable the carrying out of the works specified in the Management Plan. This can reduce the administrative work inherent in obtaining consent for individual items of management work.
- 5.3 The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 requires that all public authorities in England and Wales, when exercising their statutory functions, must have regard to the conservation of biodiversity, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of their functions.
- 5.4 Section 28Q of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 requires the owner of land included in a SSSI to inform Natural England within 28 days of any changes in ownership or occupation of the site, including leases, easements and rights.

## **6.0 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Considerations**

- 6.1 Decision makers must have due regard to the public sector equality duty in making their decisions. The public sector equality duty is set out at section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and is as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

In terms of advancing equality of opportunity, this means to:

- (i) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- (ii) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- (iii) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

In terms of:

- (a) Tackling prejudice, and
- (b) Promoting understanding,

The relevant protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race,
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and Civil partnership

6.2 At this stage, no potential adverse impact arising from the recommendations in this report has been identified. However, the equalities implications identified in the Equality Analysis will continue to be considered and assessed as further data / information is obtained or becomes available during the implementation process.

## **7.0 Stakeholder and Ward Member Consultation and Engagement**

7.1 None specific.

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

8.1 As set out in the report.

**9.0 Human Resources/Property Implications**

9.1 None specific.

**10.0 Communication Considerations**

10.1 None specific.

***Report Sign Off***

**Peter Gadsdon**

Corporate Director Resident Services