



Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee

14 March 2024

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 4 (Jan-March 2024) in respect of the Welsh Harp / West Hendon Playing Fields.

Officers Recommendations

1. That the committee note 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 Jan – March 2024 (Quarter 4), 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 have been no reported illegal encampments during Q4, 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 The council has launched a public consultation in relation to the development of the new Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and a Local Nature Recovery Plan (LNRP replace Biodiversity Action Plans), this is being led by Land Use Consultants (LUC) on behalf of the council. The consultation can be found here <https://engage.barnet.gov.uk/parks-and-open-spaces-strategy-engagement>

1.3.3 A series of Volunteer litter picking events have been organised by local groups and The CRT over the winter period with collection and clearance resources provided by the Council.

1.3.4 As members of the Thames21 Brent Catchment Partnership, the council continues to work with stakeholders on the biggest issues facing the Brent River catchment, which includes the Welsh Harp. LBB attends the working group meetings, such as the invasive non-native species control group, which has recently set up an interactive map to show INNS locations and treatment plans. 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.

1.4 West Hendon Playing Fields Master Plan

1.4.1 We concluded the first round of public engagement activities, including online surveys and in-person events in December 2023. We are compiling the results into an engagement report, which findings will be shared with through our Commonplace webpage soon.

1.4.2 In response to the overwhelming interest from the local community, we're actively fostering relationships with concerned groups and interested parties of the playing fields. Additionally, we're preparing an FAQ page on our engagement project website to

address the numerous inquiries we've received. This resource will serve as a central hub for information dissemination and clarity.

- 1.4.3 The information gathered through the engagement process will be used along with existing information help within the project team in order to inform the design development.
- 1.4.4 Visualisations and drawings depicting our evolving designs will be developed and be available for comment. These visuals will offer insights into the aesthetics, functionality, and ambiance of the site. WHJCC input will be crucial in making informed decisions regarding site options.
- 1.4.5 We are committed to a transparent and iterative design process. Resident and community feedback, along with input from other stakeholders, will drive the refinement of our designs. Another round of engagement will follow in the Summer, ensuring that our plans resonate as well as possible with expectations of a wide community.
- 1.4.6 We are planning a second round of engagement with a special focus on schools and young individuals. Their perspectives are invaluable, and we are eager to involve them in shaping the future of our project. Planning for this has begun and will begin to take shape in the coming weeks.
- 1.4.7 We propose that the project presents at an upcoming meeting whereby we can offer some visuals and update on design and engagement.

1.5 **Welsh Harp and SSSI management**

- 1.5.1 Over the Spring and Summer of 2024 an update litter management regime will be trialed in order to improve the levels of litter and waste in the area, this will be reviewed throughout the period and adjusted as required. This will be supported with two contractor led targeted deep cleanse actions that will take place post the nesting season (Aug/Sept) and pre the nesting season (Dec/Jan).
- 1.5.2 Over the Spring and Summer seasons the Council will explore options around the Public Bird hide in order to tackle the ongoing anti-social behaviour and misuse of the area. A thorough options appraisal will be completed with the aim of undertaking any require works in the autumn/winter of 2024 (subject to any approvals requires).
- 1.5.3 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.

1.5.4 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.

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 the 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 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](#)