

	Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee 21 July 2025
	Report from the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Regeneration
	Lead Member – Cabinet Member for Public Realm & Enforcement (Councillor Krupa Sheth)
Welsh Harp Management Plan Update (Brent)	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Non-key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
List of Appendices:	One Appendix A: Welsh Harp / Brent Reservoir Management Plan: Action Plan for 2025-2026
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Leslie Williams, Project Officer, Parks Services, Brent Civic Centre. Email: Leslie.Williams@Brent.gov.uk Tel: 020 8937 5628

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report presents progress on the Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan since the last meeting of the Committee and during the 2025/26 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

3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

- 3.1.1 This report updates members on the issues and progress for the Welsh Harp area. These relate to the Borough Plan Priorities. The Welsh Harp contributes to the priority of A Cleaner Greener Future and also to some of the other priorities. The Welsh Harp provides publicly accessible green space, opportunities for water sports, space for recreational exercise, habitats and biodiversity, contributes to flood control within and beyond the Brent area; and provides a landscape to enhance the surrounding residential, community and commercial neighbourhoods. The Welsh Harp contributes to strategies including the:

Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy 2021-23

Flood Risk Management Strategy

Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2027.

Further details of these and of other strategies can be found at:

<https://www.brent.gov.uk/the-council-and-democracy/strategies-priorities-and-policies>

3.2 Background

- 3.2.1 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.

- 3.2.2 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](#)

- 3.2.3 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 actions. For this committee the Action Plan is updated as Appendix A. The Action Plan provides notes and updates on issues and projects. The 'Progress' column indicates current progress.

3.2.4 Marshland work:

Following the re-commencement of coppicing and other works in early 2025, the work took a pause during the bird breeding season. Works are planned to restart in the autumn of 2025. The project is led by the Canal & River Trust, The Conservation Volunteers, Welsh Harp Sailing Association and Brent Council Parks. The works have been consented by Natural England/. Selective coppicing and other works would lead to benefits including increased light to the marshland edge, for the benefit of the marshland vegetation and wildlife, enhanced views along the reservoir edge path and across the reservoir; and reductions of the wind shadow for water wind-sport users.

3.2.5 The Conservation Volunteers

The Conservation Volunteers have continued a two-year programme of events in Brent, focused on parks and other sites that have, to date, received only limited or no conservation volunteer activity. Seasonal works continued at Neasden Recreation Ground during the spring and summer of 2025.

3.2.6 Maintenance:

Grounds maintenance continues with the parks' grounds maintenance contractor, Krinkels Ltd. Concerns and issues about the open spaces can be reported on the FixMyStreet app or by contacting the Council by email or other contact options.

3.2.7 Fly-tipping and littering

The issues of littering and fly-tipping have continued. Brent Council have removed fly-tipping on the Brent-side banks of the River Brent at Staples Corner near to Priestley Way.

3.2.8 Welsh Harp Centre:

Following a consultation meeting with Stakeholders in June 2025, the Council with the project design team has developed the RIBA stage 2 concept design. The Stage 2 concept design report has been issued to stakeholders for review and feedback. Upon approval of the Stage 2 report, the team will commence the spatial coordination design in consultation with stakeholders.

3.2.9 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 see the walking website at: [Walking for Health - Welsh Harp | Brent Council](#)

3.2.10 Pollution incidents:

Refer to the Environment Agency. Monitoring is in progress at one site with the involvement of the River Brent Catchment Partnership and the Clean Up the River Brent group.

3.2.11 Pulley Wheel sculpture

The Canal & River Trust unveiled their commissioned sculpture, created by Phil Neal at the Welsh Harp on 16 May 2025. The event was hosted at the Welsh Harp Sailing Association base. In time the sculpture will be moved to a permanent location, overlooking the reservoir, at Neasden Recreation Ground. The sculpture includes parts of the pulley blocks and chains that were part of the sluice gate mechanism that were salvaged during the 2024 works on the dam wall. Details are available by using the reference 25/0281 on the Brent Council Planning Applications webpages or the link below:

https://pa.brent.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=DCAPR_171930

3.2.12 Invasive species

The Parks Service has continued to control Giant Hogweed and Oak Processionary Moth, both at the Welsh Harp Open Space.

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 4.1 The Safeguarding, Partnership and Strategy, with the Property and Assets teams of Brent Council are conducting consultation relating to the Welsh Harp Centre.

The Welsh Harp Education Centre Project stakeholder engagement is outlined above in paragraph 3.2.8. Officers are in the process of finalising a communications strategy for the project. This will include actions to inform ward members; local residents and other relevant, interested parties as to the development of the new education centre.

5.0 Financial Considerations

- 5.1 The Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan serves primarily as a land-use document, intended to guide land managers and other stakeholders in relation to the maintenance, management, and legislative considerations affecting the Brent Reservoir and its surrounding areas. It also plays a forward-planning role by outlining potential land management needs over the longer term.
- 5.2 The actions set out in the accompanying Action Plan (Appendix A) reflect a range of potential activities that could be delivered over varying timeframes, subject to resource availability and service-level approval. All proposals will be monitored, reviewed, and re-profiled as necessary to align with available

resources. No works will proceed without the necessary approval from the relevant service and confirmation that suitable budget provision is in place.

- 5.3 As noted in the update to the Committee, the principal land-owning organisations at the Welsh Harp, along with other stakeholders, are engaging in a 'vision' exercise. This will explore long-term aspirations and consider potential funding and income opportunities to support currently unfunded priorities, subject to further review.

6.0 Legal Considerations

- 6.1 Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp is a designated 'Site of Special Scientific Interest' ('SSSI').

- 6.2 SSSIs are sites which are designated by Natural England (for sites in England) and given legal protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act ('WCA') 1981 because they are recognised as being of special interest by reason of their flora, fauna, geological or physiological features.

- 6.3 There are two main types of duty that arise under the WCA 1981 in relation to sites that are designated as SSSIs.

- 6.4 For owners/occupiers:

- 6.4.1 There is a requirement to give prior notification (under section 28E, WCA 1981) before carrying out any operations that are specified by Natural England (as part of the SSSI designation) as requiring notification to be given. The owner/occupier cannot lawfully carry out any such operation unless Natural England has given their written consent, or the operation is carried out under the auspices of a management agreement made under one of the applicable statutory provisions or under a management scheme arising under section 28 of the WCA 1981. Failure to comply may result in the commission of an offence.

- 6.5 For various types of public body (including local authorities):

- 6.5.1 When such bodies are exercising their functions in a way that is likely to affect the flora, fauna or geological or physiographical features by reason of which the site is an SSSI, they have a statutory duty (under WCA 1981, section 28G) to take reasonable steps, consistent with the proper exercise of their functions, to further the conservation and enhancement of the relevant flora, fauna or geological or physiographical features. This is a broad duty and is triggered when the features relevant to the site's designation are likely to be affected.

- 6.5.2 Public bodies are also required (under WCA 1981, section 28H) to give notice to Natural England before they carry out, in the exercise of their functions, operations likely to damage any of the flora, fauna or geological or physiographical features by reason of which an SSSI is of special interest. It is important to note that this duty also applies where

the operations would not take place on land or other feature that is itself included in an SSSI; the issue is the likelihood of damage to the relevant features arising from the proposed operations. In response to receiving notification, Natural England may assent (either with or without conditions) or refuse assent; if no response is received within 28 days, they are taken to have refused assent.

- 6.5.3 Where Natural England do not assent, or the authority proposes to carry out the operations otherwise than in accordance with the terms of the assent, the authority must not carry out the operations, unless they have notified Natural England of the date on which they propose to start the operations, and how, if at all, they have taken account of any written advice received. When carrying out the operations the authority must carry these out in such a way as to give rise to as little damage as is reasonably practicable in all the circumstances to the flora, fauna or geological or physiographical features which cause the site to be of special interest. Account must be taken of any advice that has been received from Natural England. There is also an obligation to restore the site to its former condition, so far as is reasonably practicable, if damage does occur.
- 6.5.4 A parallel duty arises (under WCA 1981, section 28I) where the public body is responsible for authorising or permitting a third party to carry out operations which are likely to damage any of the features causing the site to have been designated, again including where those operations would not themselves be within the SSSI. The public body is obliged to consult with Natural England before deciding whether to give permission for the operations to be carried out, and a similar process applies to that described above if Natural England advises against permitting the operations.
- 6.6 The Action Plan 2024-25 that is the subject of the present report notes various matters relating to WCA duties in relation to an SSSI (see, for example, the entry under 'marshland: maintain' to a programme of works for the southern shore consented by Natural England).
- 6.5 The status of a site as an SSSI is also relevant in the event of a planning application being received for development. In these circumstances, the local planning authority dealing with an application will need to ensure that it complies with all relevant notification requirements and applies any applicable national and borough level planning policies relating to SSSIs.
- 6.6 Since 1 January 2023, bodies including local authorities are under a statutory duty, introduced originally by the Environment Act 2021, to conserve and enhance biodiversity. This is envisaged as a proactive duty, rather than simply a duty to have regard to the objective of conserving and enhancing biodiversity. Active management of resources such as Brent Reservoir/Welsh Harp may contribute towards the meeting of that duty.

7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 7.1 As this report provides a general update, there are no immediate EDI implications.
- 7.2 The Public Sector Equality Duty, as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have “due regard” to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who have a “protected characteristic” and those who do not share that protected characteristic. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 7.3 Having due regard involves the need to enquire into whether and how a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic and the need to consider taking steps to meet the needs of persons who share a protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it. This includes removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- 7.4 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. The Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) relating to Brent Council’s activities outlined in these reports is in the process of being updated.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

- 8.1 The Brent Reservoir, whilst originally constructed as part of a waterways transport system, now has a role in managing the flow of the River Brent. The Reservoir has a number of in-built systems and associated procedures that help to reduce the risk of flooding to the urban communities downstream, during and following high-rainfall events.
- 8.2 The Brent Reservoir and the wider Welsh Harp area have important roles in the conservation of biodiversity. The Brent Reservoir is a Site of Special Scientific Interest on account of the significance of its wildlife.

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

- 9.1 None specific

10.0 Communication Considerations

- 10.1 The Welsh Harp ‘Vision’, healthy living initiatives and the provision of information about the Welsh Harp have been mentioned in this report.

Report sign off:

Alice Lester

Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and
Regeneration