



Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee

24 November 2025

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 2 (Jul-Sept 2025/26) in respect of the Welsh Harp / West Hendon Playing Fields.

Officers Recommendations

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

WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 The Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee (WHJCC) is comprised of the Canal 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 Quarter 2 (Jul-Sept 2025), 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 Barnet Council are working the Environment Agency and specialist contractors to gain access to and clear the riverside waste upstream of the Silk Stream trash screen.
 - 1.3.2 There remain consistent fly tipping issues at Priestly Way, located opposite the advertising hoarding. Waste contamination and access issues has hampered an effective response from Barnet Council, who commit to rectifying the situation within the next month. The Council relies on reporting to identify and clear fly tip. Please report any fly tipping around the Welsh Harp to parks@barnet.gov.uk
 - 1.3.3 A series of volunteer litter picking events have been organised by the Friends of the Welsh Harp over the late summer/autumn period, with collection and clearance resources provided by the Council.
 - 1.3.4 The Council is a member of the Thames21 Brent Catchment Partnership and continues to work with stakeholders on the biggest issues facing the Brent River catchment, which includes the Welsh Harp. Officers attend working group meetings, such as the invasive non-native species (INNS) control group, which has recently produced an interactive map to show INNS locations and treatment plans (www.innsmapper.org). 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, as Schedule 9 species it is illegal to plant or allow them to spread. The Council has engaged our specialist contractor for significant additional spraying, the total area of giant hogweed spot-treated this year-to-date being 2775 square metres. Japanese knotweed treatment is in progress, with additional locations identified using INNS tracker.
 - 1.3.5 In consultation with the Friends of the Welsh Harp, Barnet Council resources have been redeployed from contractor litter picks to invasive non-native species treatment. Treatment was successful on the left bank of the Silk Stream downriver of the trash screen. Access issues prevented comprehensive treatment of the corresponding area on the right bank, which we aim to resolve spring 2026.
- 1.4 **West Hendon Playing Fields Master Plan**

- 1.4.1 The West Hendon Playing Fields project is progressing with a phased approach to delivering the masterplan, as approved by Cabinet in July 2025.
- 1.4.2 The phased approach will have an initial focus on improvements to existing facilities. Design work is continuing for access and drainage improvements. Refurbishment of the existing tennis courts, the introduction of a new 3x3 basketball court and installation of a new play area are expected to start by spring 2026, subject to seasonal conditions.
- 1.4.3 The subsequent phase is working towards the masterplan and Playing Pitch Strategy aspirations for a Sports Hub, within current budget limitations. Feasibility for a 3G pitch has been completed, in collaboration with the Football Foundation, as the initial step towards a planning application in the coming months and a subsequent funding bid.
- 1.5 **Welsh Harp and SSSI management**
 - 1.5.1 Work has commenced on the restoration of the North Marsh area of the site, a project managed by CRT and partially funded by LBB (Wings on Water). CRT to provide updates on the progress of this project.
 - 1.5.2 [The Conservation Volunteers](#) (TCV) have started their weekly habitat management sessions, Welsh Harp Wednesdays, every Wednesday from 10am – 3pm throughout winter. These sessions will focus on habitat management and enhancement work, informed by the site management plan and suggestions from key stakeholders.
 - 1.5.3 In April 2023 the Council were alerted to concerns relating to the SSSI as a result of development from a property in Woolmead Avenue. This has remained under review by the Councils Planning Enforcement team who have worked with Natural England to review and resolve matters, issuing an enforcement notice in May 2023. Subsequently a retrospective application for construction work (23/2569/RCU) was refused by the London Borough of Barnet Planning Dept. A further notice was issued in November 2023, outlining a requirement to demolish and remove materials from the property (ENF/0522/23). An appeal was issued in 29 January 2025, and the Council's decision was upheld (24/00031/ENF). An independent inspector has provided up to 29th July 2025 to comply with the terms of the enforcement notice or obtain relevant consents. On 17th October 2025, a retrospective planning application was submitted ([25/4177/RCU | Erection of a single storey rear outbuilding. \(Retrospective application\) | 38 Woolmead Avenue London NW9 7AY](#)) and is pending consideration. The Council will continue to monitor.
 - 1.5.4 The council continues to work in partnership with Brent Council, Canal and River Trust, The GLA, The London Wildlife Trust and Thames 21 in delivering the overarching Vision for the Welsh Harp, Welsh Harp Management Plan and Brent Catchment Partnership & Action Plan.
 - 1.5.5 Following the initial Member briefing on 29 May, Barratt prepared a Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and Delivery Roadmap in consultation with the LBB Regeneration team. This was finalised in July, with regular updates provided as work has progressed.

- A Socio-Economic review confirmed the continued need for the bridge to enable provision of play space in line with original planning requirements.
- A second Member briefing was held on 28 August to share progress and gather input.
- Ongoing engagement has taken place with key stakeholders, including:
 - Designing Out Crime Officers (DOCO)
 - LBB Greenspaces and Planning Officers
 - Natural England
 - Canal & River Trust (CRT)

Next steps include:

- A Design Team Meeting with LBB Greenspaces, DOCO, LBB Regeneration Officers, and consultants to refine proposals and ensure alignment with the West Hendon Playing Fields.
- A follow-up meeting with Planning Officers to review refined proposals.
- Preparation of a Councillor update, alongside a resident newsletter and project website, which will provide information on proposals, next steps, and an opportunity for feedback.

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

- 5.1.1 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](#)

6.5 [West Hendon Playing Fields Masterplan Update – Cabinet 22 July 2025, Agenda Item 22](#)