



Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee

26 March 2026

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 3&4 (Oct-Mar 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 River Trust, LB Barnet, LB Brent, Welsh Harp Conservation Group, Welsh Harp Sailing Association, Friends of the Welsh Harp and the Phoenix Canoe Club. The committee is a consultative committee and meets on a quarterly basis.
- 1.2 In summary, during the financial year 25/26, LB Barnet have:
- Spent over £210,000 on [site improvements](#), including providing £150,000 match funding to CRT Wings on Water project and £17,000 on repairing the footpath network.
 - Planned and funded 15 training and/or engagement sessions, including field recorder days with The Biological Recording Company, species surveys and rewilding webinars with Citizen Zoo, and volunteer training and wildlife walks with TCV.
 - In addition to these sessions, TCV have been running weekly habitat management days (Welsh Harp Wednesdays). As of Feb 2026, these events have supported
 - 306 volunteer hours
 - 39 new volunteers
 - collection of 22 bags of litter
 - habitat management of 1204 m² (this includes the reedbed and bramble management, blackthorn coppicing, and gorse patch restoration)
 - creation of 146m of dead hedging
 - Treated 2,775m² of Invasive Non-Native Species, including giant hogweed and Japanese knotweed.
 - Removed and disposed of litter daily and fly tipping when reported, most recently 4 tonnes from Priestly Way.
- 1.3 During Quarter 3&4 (Oct-Mar 2025/26), the Council progressed a series of activities in relation to the management and operation of the Welsh Harp and West Hendon Playing Fields. These activities have been categorised under the main themes of the [Welsh Harp Vision](#), a document written and adopted by the Welsh Harp Strategy Group in 2023 aiming to improve the site for both people and wildlife.

2. Place

2.1 Care

- 2.1.1 LB Barnet, assisted by contractors and colleagues in Street Scene, have undertaken two major clearances of fly tipping at Priestley Way this quarter. Four tonnes of waste was removed in February 2026.
- 2.1.2 LB Barnet have appointed contractors to litter pick the bankside area upstream from the Silk Stream trash screen, scheduled April 2026. Access arrangements are being coordinated with the Environment Agency.

2.1.3 A series of volunteer litter picking events have been organised by the Friends of the Welsh Harp over the autumn and winter, with collection and clearance resources provided by LB Barnet and the events supported by the Pheonix Canoe Club.

2.2 Governance and oversight

2.2.1 LB Barnet 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. As a result, LB Barnet has engaged a specialist contractor to carry out spot treatment of 2775m² of giant hogweed. Japanese knotweed treatment is in progress, with additional locations identified using INNS tracker.

2.2.2 LB Barnet continues to work in partnership with LB Brent, 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. In November 2025, LB Barnet attended a meeting organised by LB Brent attended by CRT and Thames 21 to discuss progress on the actions of the Welsh Harp Vision. An update on the action plan was submitted to LB Brent in February 2026 and we are updating the next meeting date.

2.3 Identity and Heritage

2.3.1 See section 5.2.

3. Environment

3.1 Biodiversity

3.1.1 Work has progressed on the 'Wings on Water' project, aiming to restore a large area of the North Marsh. The project has been managed by CRT and partially funded by LBB (£150,000) and the Kusuma Trust. CRT to provide updates on the progress of this project.

3.1.2 The Welsh Harp was one of several sites across London that Citizen Zoo carried out a survey for German Hairy Snails. Although none of these species were recorded, common species and a species previously not recorded in the borough were found. More information here: [Conservationists unite to save London's rare 'German' hairy snail - BBC News](#).

3.1.3 [The Conservation Volunteers](#) (TCV) continue to run their weekly habitat management sessions, Welsh Harp Wednesdays, every Wednesday from 10am – 3pm throughout winter and into spring. These sessions focus on habitat management and enhancement work, informed by the site management plan and suggestions from key stakeholders. LB Barnet has provided £2850 of funding for storage and tools for the work. The work aligns with the aims of the Welsh Harp Vision, for example creating dead hedges to define areas for people and wildlife and enhance the habitats present.

3.1.4 In addition to the habitat management days, TCV are also holding 10 community engagement sessions and volunteer training days at the site throughout 2026, details [here](#).

3.1.5 Citizen Zoo and The Biological Recording Company are also running six training and engagement events throughout 2026. These include a rewilding webinar about ospreys and water voles at the site, as well as field recorder days that aim to engage residents and collect baseline species data for the site. More details [here](#).

3.1.6 A full schedule of events funded and coordinated by LB Barnet are below:

Date	Start	End	Topic	Location	How to sign up
19/02/26	19:00	20:30	Urban Rewilding at the Welsh Harp	Online Webinar	Webinar: Could the Welsh Harp one day support ospreys and water voles? Tickets, Thu, Feb 19, 2026 at 7:00 PM Eventbrite
28/02/26	10:00	13:00	What to do with green waste (A guide to dead hedging)	Welsh Harp	How to Create Habitat Structures Tickets, Sat, Feb 28, 2026 at 10:00 AM Eventbrite
22/03/26	10:30	12:00	Signs of Spring - Wildlife Walk	Welsh Harp	Signs of Spring at Welsh Harp Tickets, Sun, Mar 22, 2026 at 10:30 AM Eventbrite
28/03/26	10:00	13:00	Meadow Management	Welsh Harp	Creating and Managing a Meadow Habitat Tickets, Sat, Mar 28, 2026 at 10:00 AM Eventbrite
01/04/26	10:30	15:30	Earthworm Sampling Day	Welsh Harp	Earthworm Sampling Day Tickets, Wed, Apr 1, 2026 at 10:00 AM Eventbrite
19/04/26	10:30	12:00	Bumblebee Walk - Wildlife Walk	Welsh Harp	Bumblebee Walk Tickets, Sun, Apr 19, 2026 at 10:30 AM Eventbrite
21/04/26	10:30	15:30	Invertebrate Field Recorder Day	Welsh Harp	Invertebrate Field Recorder Day Tickets, Tuesday, Apr 21 from 10:30 am to 3:30 pm Eventbrite
23/04/26	09:30	16:30	Environmental Leadership Training	Welsh Harp	Environmental Leadership Training Tickets, Thursday, Apr 23 from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm Eventbrite
01/05/26	10:00	13:00	How to run Environmental Education Events	Welsh Harp	How to Run Environmental Education Events Tickets, Friday, May 1 from 10 am to 1 pm Eventbrite
15/05/26	10:00	16:30	Environmental Risk Assessment Training	Welsh Harp	Environmental Risk Assessment Training Tickets, Friday, May 15 from 9 am to 4:30 pm Eventbrite
17/05/26	10:30	12:00	Dragonfly and Damselfly survey - Wildlife Walk	Welsh Harp	Dragonfly and Damselfly survey Tickets, Sun, May 17, 2026 at 10:30 AM Eventbrite
30/05/26	10:30	12:00	Butterfly Walk - Wildlife Walk	Welsh Harp	Butterfly Walk Tickets, Sat, May 30, 2026 at 10:30 AM Eventbrite

Date	Start	End	Topic	Location	How to sign up
24/06/26	10:00	16:00	Botany Field Recorder Day	Welsh Harp	Botany Field Recorder Day Tickets, Wed, Jun 24, 2026 at 10:00 AM Eventbrite
19/09/26	10:00	16:00	Plant Gall Field Recorder Day	Welsh Harp	Plant Gall Field Recorder Day Tickets, Sat, Sep 19, 2026 at 10:00 AM Eventbrite
15/10/26	10:00	16:00	Fungi Field Recorder Day	Welsh Harp	Fungi Field Recorder Day Tickets, Thu, Oct 15, 2026 at 10:00 AM Eventbrite

3.1.7 LB Barnet have provided updated habitat management information to LB Brent for their annual review of the site management plan.

3.1.8 LB Barnet have supported bird ringing (carried out by an appropriate licensed person) at the Welsh Harp, which has seen coots, Canada geese and swans ringed this winter. Citizen science data collected as part of this project will contribute to national and international bird population and distribution research.

3.2 Water

3.2.1 No updates during this reporting period (Q3 & Q4 25/26).

3.3 Climate Resilience

3.3.1 Street trees have been planted on West Hendon Broadway (winter 25/26), helping to create habitat corridors and green the residential areas around the Welsh Harp.

4. Wellbeing

4.1 Health and wellbeing

4.1.1 No updates during this reporting period (Q3 & Q4 25/26).

4.2 Sport and Recreation

4.2.1 The West Hendon Playing Fields project is progressing with a phased approach to delivering the masterplan, as approved by Cabinet in July 2025.

4.2.2 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 playground are scheduled to start on site in spring 2026, subject to seasonal conditions.

4.2.3 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.

4.3 Connection to Nature

4.3.1 In addition to the habitat management days, TCV are also holding 10 community engagement sessions and volunteer training days at the site throughout 2026, details [here](#). and linked in the table above. The engagement days, aimed at local residents and those that might be new to the site are proposed on the following dates:

- Signs of Spring – 22nd March - 10.30am – 12.30pm
- Bee Walk – 19th April – 10.30am – 1pm
- Dragonfly/Pond Survey – 17th May - 10.30am - 12.30pm
- Butterfly Walk – 30th May – 10.30am-1pm

5. **INCLUSION**

5.1 **Access and Movement**

5.1.1 In winter 25/26, LB Barnet assigned £17,000 of capital funding to the upgrade of the footpath network, addressing the waterlogging and flooding issues that leave stretches inaccessible during the winter months. Repairs to drainage culverts was undertaken autumn 2025, with surface repairs to be undertaken spring 2026.

5.2 **Knowledge**

5.2.1 LB Barnet have worked with CRT to agree the locations of new lectern-style interpretation panels at key locations around the reservoir. These include information on the biodiversity, history and heritage of the site. Of the ten proposed, two of the proposed locations fall on LB Barnet land:

- Near the bird viewing platform off Cool Oak Lane (what3words: ///expect.quest.stop)
- Near Phoenix Canoe Club (what3words: ///retail.bets.silent)

6. **Planning Updates**

6.1 Between December 2025 and January 2026 Barratts submitted a range of information to LBB Planning on discharging planning conditions related the consented Silkstream Bridge Planning application.

6.2 The below was submitted to the Local Planning Authority for review:

- [26/0442/CON | Submission of details of condition 2 \(Materials\) pursuant to planning permission 18/1163/RMA dated 26/10/18 | Silk Stream Bridge West Hendon Estate London NW9 7EZ](#)
- [26/0539/CON | Submission of details of condition 5 \(Woodland Management Plan\) pursuant to planning permission 18/1163/RMA dated 26/10/2018 | Silk Stream Bridge West Hendon Estate London NW9](#)
- [26/0540/CON | Submission of details of condition 6 \(Ecological Management Plan\) pursuant to planning permission 18/1163/RMA dated 26/10/2018 | Silk Stream Bridge West Hendon Estate London NW9](#)

- [26/0541/CON | Submission of details of condition 7 \(Woodland/Bird Features\) pursuant to planning permission 18/1163/RMA dated 26/10/2018 | Silk Stream Bridge West Hendon Estate London NW9](#)

These documents will also be reviewed by Natural England.

- 6.3 Regarding Barratt’s Silkstream Bridge Engagement Strategy, Barratt’s Building Relations Team have confirmed that they are carrying out ground investigation surveys to finalise aspects of the design for the new bridge, which have been shared with the Canal River Trust, Natural England, the LPA and Barnet Regeneration Officers, before construction of the bridge starts later this year. They also confirm that information on the bridge will be available on an accessible web page.
- 6.4 In April 2023 LB Barnet 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](#)) pending consideration. On 9th February 2026, the planning department informed Greenspaces “the case is now closed. This is because it was determined that the outbuilding falls within permitted development. The reason an enforcement notice was served is because the main dwelling was believed to be flats, in which case permitted development rights are removed. However, the agents have proven that when the outbuilding was constructed, the main dwelling house was in fact a single dwelling and is still a single dwelling.”. The Greenspaces Service is looking into the issues of encroachment and works undertaken inside the open space land and boundary.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 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.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

8.1 N/A

9. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

9.1 The Council will continue to develop the new and emerging policies as set out in section 1.2.1 of this report.

10. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

10.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

10.1.1 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.

10.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

10.2.1 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.

10.3 Social Value

10.3.1 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.

10.4 Legal and Constitutional References

10.4.1 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.

10.4.2 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.

10.5 Risk Management

10.5.1 There are no risk management issues associated with this report.

10.6 Equalities and Diversity

10.6.1 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

10.7 Corporate Parenting Principles

10.7.1 N/A

10.8 Consultation and Engagement

10.8.1 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.

10.9 Insight

10.9.1 None

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 The Welsh Harp Management Plan can be found on Brent Council's website: www.brent.gov.uk/parks in the biodiversity section.

11.2 [West Hendon Playing Fields Outline Business Case – Policy and Resources Committee 16 July 2021, Agenda Item 9](#)

11.3 [Parks and Open Spaces Update – Environment and Climate Change Committee 9 June 2022, Agenda Item 9](#)

- 11.4 [Welsh Harp Vision Update – Environment and Climate Change Committee 6 September 2022, Agenda Item 14](#)
- 11.5 [West Hendon Playing Fields Masterplan Update – Cabinet 22 July 2025, Agenda Item 22](#)