

Decisions of the Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee

25 July 2018

Members Present:

Barnet Councillors John Hart, Nagus Narenthira, Saira Don, and Jess Brayne.
Brent Councillors Amer Agha and Parvez Ahmed.
Canal and River Trust: Richard Bennett
London Wildlife Trust: Catherine Cullen, Dianne Murphy, Clive Cohen,
Environment Agency: Samantha Ho
Hendon Rifle Club: Dale Langdale
Welsh Harp Sailing Association: David Rose, John Shepherd
Welsh Harp Conservation Group: Roy Beddard
West Hendon Allotment Society: Liz Hall
West Hendon Residents' Association: Derrick Chung
Friends of the Welsh Harp: Daniella Levene
Brent River Catchment Partnership: Lucy Shuker
Cleaner Earth UK: Peter and Renata Eros
Woolmead Residents' Association: Geoffrey Johnson

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED:

- (i) That Councillor John Hart be elected as the Chairman for the municipal year.
- (ii) That Councillor Roxanne Mashari be elected as the Vice Chairman for the municipal year.

2. MINUTES

The following outstanding items were noted:

Item 13 – Bird Flu (Avian) Clive Cohen (London Wildlife Trust) queried whether there had been any incidents of bird flu. Richard Bennett (Canal and River Trust) confirmed that there were no incidents of confirmed bird flu at the Welsh Harp.

Item 7 - Hose pipe item under Management plan:

A further incident had been witnessed of a hose pipe being used to continue draining waste from a private property into the Welsh Harp.

No feedback was received and therefore the following matters were to be raised with the Greenspaces team of Barnet Council:

- a. An update on the works on Cool Oak Bridge;
- b. To obtain a report on how to deal with prevention of the drainage of waste from the hose pipe.

Nathan Smith had provided as response on the subject of bat and bird boxes which was circulated separately.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That Matthew Gunyon would provide an update with regards to the hose pipe drainage of waste.
- (ii) That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as an accurate record.

3. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Matthew Gunyon, Nathan Smith and Julie Johnson.

4. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND NON PECUNIARY INTERESTS

None.

5. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER (IF ANY)

None.

6. MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS

Two new voluntary organisations had put their applications forward:

1. Cleaner Earth (Peter and Renata Eros) had an interest in the lake. The organisation was founded last December and came about due to the landfill and years of neglect at the Welsh Harp. Cleaner Earth had cleaned up 30 tonnes of rubbish from Neasden Recreation Ground. They were also involved with Friends of the Welsh Harp to collectively clean up the area to reduce rubbish going into lake. Failure to do so would result in the rubbish going into the canal and eventually into the ocean. Cleaner Earth which had 15 active residents and expanding also searched for illegal camps and if there were any, they were reported. But only the Brent side was said to be monitored. There was a lot of pollution, illegal barbequing and picnicking taking place in the area.

Councillor Amer Agha from the London Borough of Brent commented that with regards to the encampment, Brent had a safer neighbourhood manager conducting regular checks. The Chair commented that it was a joint aim to keep things tidy and to keep waste down. The Chair referred the application to members and questioned whether that initiative should be represented by the Committee.

Following discussion, the Committee voted on whether to include Cleaner Earth as a member of the Welsh Harp Consultative Committee.

The Committee unanimously agreed to allow membership.

2. Brent Catchment Partnership (Dr Lucy Shuker) was committed to improving the rivers, brooks and streams within the River Brent catchment in North and West London and it was proposed that the organisation be allowed to join the Committee.

Following discussion, the Committee voted on whether to include Brent Catchment Partnership as a member of the Welsh Harp Consultative Committee. The Committee unanimously agreed to allow membership.

7. LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT - WELSH HARP MANAGEMENT PLAN

Leslie Williams introduced the report updating the Committee on the progress of the Brent Welsh Harp Management Plan. Mr Williams advised that appendix A of the report listed the main items on the plan. He informed the Committee that the Oak Processionary Moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*) had recently been reported as present at the Welsh Harp and was considered to be a health hazard. A protein in the caterpillars' tiny hairs could cause skin and eye irritations, sore throats and breathing difficulties in people and animals who encounter them. He said priorities had been set to reduce the spread of these moths, The Welsh Harp Sailing Association reported infestation on the site and explained consultation between the Forestry Commission and Brent had taken place, resulting in plans to cut affected trees down. However, the Committee was advised that the recommendation was not to cut down trees as they did not necessarily prevent the spread of moths in all incidences. The Committee noted the best time to carry out treatment of the moths was during winter months and that members of the public who were in any doubt could report and post images of the moths onto the Friends of Welsh Harp website.

As noted above, an update had been requested from Barnet Council with regards to Cool Oak Bridge due to the site currently acting as a hotspot for fly tipping. The Committee heard the area was scheduled to be cleared once a week as a priority clearance place, located at the border of Barnet and Brent. The Committee discussed solutions to stop culprits and the possibility of CCTV being placed in the area. The Committee felt educational messages and signage information were lacking in both Brent and Barnet locations, despite continuous requests from Cleaner Earth. Councillor Agha confirmed that Brent was removing the rubbish but it was not related to the Brent bin collection services. The rubbish that was dumped was building waste and other big items, with rubbish reportedly been thrown out of moving vehicles.

The London Wildlife Trust suggested otters were present on almost every waterway and should be encouraged to the Welsh Harp by installing a suitable holt. The London Wildlife Trust suggested the Otters could also be used as a preventative measure against the invasive Crayfish species. The trust explained that the signal crayfish's extensive burrows destabilise banks, causing erosion and bank collapse, increasing flood risk and the silt load in the water. They feed on fish and amphibian eggs, tadpoles, juvenile fish, aquatic invertebrates, detritus and aquatic vegetation and where present reduce populations of native species and affect food webs.

It was requested by the London Wildlife Trust that a couple of halts should be established. Richard Bennett from the Canal & River Trust proposed to have further discussions, as there might not be opportunities for otters to spread into the Welsh Harp itself and so research needed to be conducted prior to installation of holts. The Committee were told the cost of installing holts would be minimal and would need to be implemented more on the Brent side of the Welsh Harp.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That Greenspaces would be asked to introduce new bins and signage at the appropriate locations to prevent littering at hotspots.

- (ii) That Greenspaces investigate the possibility of putting in place interventions by introducing enforcement officers into the area or via installation of CCTV cameras. That the Canal River Trust, the Environment Agency and The London Wildlife Trust collectively investigate the introduction of Otters to the Welsh Harp to control the signal crayfish.

8. LONDON BOROUGH OF BARNET - WELSH HARP MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Chairman advised that Matthew Gunyon (Partnership and Development Manager, Greenspaces Barnet Council) had sent his apologies and had been unable to send a representative to the meeting. The Chairman confirmed that any actions for the Greenspaces team would be recorded and forwarded to the team following the meeting.

Councillor Brayne moved a motion requesting that Matthew Gunyon attend all future Committee meetings or send a representative for Barnet Greenspaces when unable to attend himself. This was agreed by the Committee.

Councillor Brayne queried whether the recent warm weather had impacted the Welsh Harp. The Canal and River Trust confirmed that the levels of water in reservoir were maintained and no major drops in water had been observed, compared to other reservoirs in the country. It was noted that during heavy rain, the reservoir filled up quickly.

The Committee raised concerns around the risk of fire when the height of grass was high. Councillor Agha advised that the schedule for grass cutting for Brent was available on Brent Council website.

The Committee discussed incidences of people swimming in the reservoir during the hot weather, which is dangerous due to the hidden undercurrents. The Committee discussed the fact that clear warning signs were displayed to prohibit swimming and these signs had been chosen due to their universal nature, allowing all nationalities to understand the dangers. Some members suggested police patrol the vulnerable areas.

The Welsh Harp Sailing Association said members of the public had been spotted using an inflatable dingy in open spaces on the water during sailing but it was not within the Welsh Harp Sailing Association's remit to police the waters. The Committee also suggested danger signs be placed around the edge near the sailing association jetties before the canoe club as these are particularly dangerous spots. The Committee advised that the dangers of sudden surges of water needed to be made clear to the public and suggested local papers or visual signs could be used to highlight this.

The Committee asked for an update from the Canal and River Trust on the dangerous wooden slabs that had been reported near the close by the Brent River. The Canal and River Trust pointed out that investigations including vegetation surveys were being conducted and would be completed by September.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That an update be provided from Barnet Council on how the grass is managed during the dry period from Barnet Council
- (ii) That an update on the dangerous wooden slabs near the close by Brent river which was reported to Canal and River Trust be provided.
- (iii) To communicate the danger of sudden surges of water to the public via the local paper/ have police in the area/ visual signs.

- (iv) That Mathew Gunyon or a representative from Barnet be asked to be present at all future Committee meetings.

9. VERBAL UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES IN THE WELSH HARP

None.

10. WATER TESTING VERBAL UPDATE

Samantha Ho (Environmental Agency) introduced the verbal update on the water testing around the Welsh Harp, as requested at the previous meeting. A map of the EA water quality sampling points pertaining to the Welsh Harp was included in the agenda. This showed three sampling points; the Silk Stream at Silk Bridge, A5, Hendon; Brent river at Priestly Way, Hendon; river Brent at Neasden Lane, Wembley. Water quality samples were taken of each river and given a unique reference number. Sampling was quarterly and under threat due to budgetary cuts.

The Committee discussed the recent paint factory fire incident and it was noted that the factory was closed on site but there were ongoing investigations being carried out. The cause of the fire was still unknown but a preliminary response was available. The Environment Agency (EA) were continuing to evaluate pollution around the Welsh Harp following the fire. The Committee were told the EA hotline was 0800 181716 and Blue green algae which had been reported would be analysed and taken from the Council and land owner.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Environment Agency look at sampling points around the Welsh Harp and report back to the Committee
- (ii) That the Committee be kept updated on the paint factory incident.
- (iii) The Committee suggested members conduct the following where possible:
 - An organised walk around the reservoir
 - Participation in the London River Sweep that tackled invasive species with members of the public.
 - Attend 'Clean up events' The Welsh Harp Sailing Association could take members out on the water

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The West Hendon Residents Association reported that the Silk stream under the bridge near Rams Close was reportedly being littered continuously and that preventions were to be put in place.

Councillor Brayne suggested that if the Residents' Association did not get a response from the Council on issues, they should email their Local Councillors.

Action: Matthew Gunyon

Richard Bennett requested projector facilities be used at future meetings to aid the discussions and demonstrate photos or actions.

Clive Cohen from the London Wildlife Trust suggested members introduce themselves at the start of the meeting.

12. ANY OTHER ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

None.

Meeting ended at 8.30pm.