

## Decisions of the Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee

29 November 2016

Members Present -

Chairman: Councillor Sury Khatri  
Vice-Chairman: Councillor Amer Agha

Councillor John Hart

Councillor Adam Langleben

Also in attendance

Tracey Sawyer-London Borough of Barnet  
Leslie Williams-London Borough of Brent  
Liz Hall-West Hendon Allotment Society  
Roy Beddard-Welsh Harp Conservation Group  
Neale Hider-Environment Agency  
Derrick Chung- West Hendon Residents' Association/Friends of  
York Park  
Diane Murphy-London Wildlife Trust  
Daniella Levene -Friends of Welsh Harp (Thames21)  
John Shepherd-Welsh Harp Sailing Association  
Julie Johnson-Local Agenda 21  
Clive Cohen-London Wildlife Trust  
Catherine Cullen-London Wildlife Trust  
Phil Atkinson- Phoenix Canoe Club  
Eric Holroyd-Barratt London  
Geof Johnson- Woolmead Residents' Association

### 1. MINUTES OF 10 JULY 2016

Clive Cohen from the London Wildlife Trust requested that when Councillors are not able to attend they should send their substitute. Councillor Khatri responded that this will require change to the Constitution of both Barnet & Brent and agreed to take this forward with governance officers. (**Action:** Cllr Khatri)

Leslie Williams from the London Borough of Brent made a correction on p.2 of the minutes that there is no budget available to introduce a kingfisher bank. Mr Cohen mentioned that the minutes of the last meeting should include a reference to the new officer Catherine Cullen that joined the London Wildlife Trust. At the time of the meeting she had been post for 2-3 days and her role was around S106 funding related to the warden for the Welsh Harp and the impact on the SSSI by the development of the area.

Mr Cohen asked what would happen in the absence of budget being available. Mr Williams responded that kingfishers do not nest in high density so a kingfisher bank would not have a great impact. Brent is part of the River Brent Catchment Partnership who are investigating a project to remove redundant timber toe-boarding from sections of

the riverbank, upstream and downstream of the Welsh Harp. The more natural riverbanks may benefit several species of wildlife.

Mr Roy Beddard from Welsh Harp Conservation Group mentioned that there are probably two kingfisher nests. There is evidence that there is breeding taking place this year. They have seen birds passing in the breeding season carrying fish which is an indication that breeding is taking place.

A kingfisher bank would be very expensive to build, it's not very clear where it should be placed and it would disturb other habitants. Mr Beddard expressed his opinion that a kingfisher bank is not needed and that there are other high priority issues that need to be addressed.

Neale Hider from the Environment Agency said that there are some smaller versions of a kingfisher bank and they are installing some in another area. A sand Martin bank would have a greater impact on the site than a kingfisher bank. There are other sand Martin sites which are expanding because of good breeding success and a feasibility study could be done for a sand Martin's site to be installed on one of the islands in the Welsh Harp.

Ms Julie Johnson from Local Agenda 21 asked whether the committee can be advised of costs involved before any action is taken.

Mr Cohen added that a sand Martin bank would be adding another environment to the purpose of the Welsh Harp.

Mr Hider added that they are able to provide costings for a sand martin bank and look into the different options of a kingfisher bank and a sand martin bank and bring a report to the next Committee meeting. The report can also include funding options and possible locations.

Councillor Hart seconded Mr Hider's proposal.

The Committee unanimously agreed the recommendation and it was therefore **RESOLVED:**

**That the Environment Agency would look into costs for a sand Martin bank, the different options for a kingfisher bank and sand Martin bank, funding options and possible locations and bring a report at the next Committee meeting.**

Mr Beddard added that there is evidence that a properly constructed sand Martin bank could be efficient. He added that a sand Martin bank needs to be considered along with other issues in the priority list.

The 2015 report from the Welsh Harp Conservation Group was an action from the last minutes and it was circulated by the governance officer prior to the Committee meeting.

Mr Cohen mentioned that it would be helpful to clearly mark the actions that arise from each meeting in the minutes.

Mr Beddard mentioned tree felling has been taking place again and he is not aware of who is responsible for this. The incident took place over a week ago. Mr Cohen added

that if tree felling is observed then people should dial 101 for them to investigate and they are present very quickly.

Regarding the action on page 3 of the minutes of the last meeting, the Chairman said he wrote to the Canal and River Trust but has not received a response yet.

Regarding the question on rat control in the last minutes, the Chairman referred to the information which was circulated by Mr Williams.

Ms Tracey Sawyer from the London Borough of Barnet also added that in Barnet there is an internal pest control. Daniella from Friends of Welsh Harp mentioned that there is a need to educate people not to feed the birds because this is what is causing this issue. Mr Geoffrey Johnson from Woolmead Residents' Association also added the issue is created when people throw bread in the bank.

Subject to the changes being taken into account, the Committee agreed that the minutes of the last Committee held on 19 July be approved as a correct record.

**2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS**

Councillor Kay, Councillor Dixon, Councillor Mashari, Nathan Smith (Barratts) and Rosanna Chambers (London Wildlife Trust) had sent their apologies for the meeting.

**3. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND NON PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

Councillor	Nature of Interest	Details
Councillor Langleben	Pecuniary interest	Trustee on the West Hendon Estate Community Trust Fund

**4. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER (IF ANY)**

None.

**5. LONDON BOROUGH OF BARNET - WELSH HARP MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Ms Sawyer introduced the report which related to the London Borough of Barnet Welsh Harp Management Plan.

Ms Sawyer informed the Committee that her team conducted regular patrols for rough sleepers and located 8 persons behind the allotments. This was done on a weekly basis and felt that her team were on top of the problem. Since then there haven't been any reports of any further encampments

There has been effective work in regards to the treatment of knotweed and hogweed. Some additional areas for the hogweed were identified and these are to be targeted. They will be also monitoring before the next stem injection.

The treatment is carried out around June/July and surveys take place around May. Mr Cohen added that it is important to apply the treatment before flowering. This was noted.

Ms Sawyer informed the Committee that if they identify knotweed and hogweed in other areas they should email [parks@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:parks@barnet.gov.uk)

Ms Catherine Cullen from London Wildlife Trust requested a current map that shows all the areas that have been injected. The Committee unanimously agreed. **(Action: Ms Tracy Sawyer)**

Ms Sawyer also added that they have completed the contract procurement process for bigger litter bins and they were going to order them and would be installed in the near future. Councillor Hart asked whether these bins were for dual purpose, both for recycling and other waste. Tracey responded that these bins are only large bins. Ms Daniella Levene asked whether these bins were bird proofed and Ms Sawyer responded that these bins will have lids.

Ms Johnson from Local Agenda 21 asked whether there are any signs placed across the Welsh Harp that notify people that the water is deep because a lady from West Hendon drowned. Ms Sawyer responded that there were 'no swimming' signs on site but would investigate into placing larger signs in the water and which could be installed.

Ms Liz Hall from the West Hendon Allotment Society stated that the 'no fishing' signs were ineffective. Mr John Shepherd from the Welsh Harp Sailing Association added that there is a need to patrol the area to tackle illegal fishing. However signs by itself do not deter but need regular patrols of the area.

Mr Hider added that checks can be carried out to see if people have a licence and prosecute if necessary. Mr Shepherd added that even if people have licences, fishing is not allowed. Mr Hider said that the only thing they can do is engage with the enforcement team and he agreed to forward details and contacts. **(Action: Mr Hider)**.

#### **NB: POST MEETING**

Subsequent to the meeting Mr Hider advised that:

"I have spoken to one of our enforcement officers regarding illegal fishing at the Welsh Harp.

Our officers are only allowed to check for valid rod licences to see if people have paid their licence fee. However, I'm informed that since last April it has become a criminal offence to fish a water without the land owners permission.

Firstly, we have to ensure that there are sufficient notices on site with the correct wording - 'no fishing – it is now a criminal offence to fish without the landowners consent'. We can help with wording if needs be. These signs would have to be in the water at strategic points (usually access points) to avoid being defaced or removed.

When patrolling officers need a reference point on site to ensure people have ignored or deliberately gone against instruction notices and not just missed them. That's why sufficient and appropriate signage has to be in place. With the winter and cold weather with us hopefully fishing on the Harp will be in decline, signs need to be in place for spring .

Once this is in place our enforcement officer/team is prepared to visit the site to check rod licences - and prosecute if they do not have such documents - but will need to be accompanied by a representative of the land owner (and possibly police to enforce the illegal fishing act itself). If anglers present do have a rod licence he can only warn and advise individuals that they are not fishing legally.

To assist with a site visit it would be helpful for any reports of fishing to be collated and a record kept – days of the week, times and where on the Harp so that we can establish the most likely time to encounter anglers.”

“ We have established an initial working group to explore the possibilities and opportunities of installing a sand martin nesting bank at the Welsh Harp. It consists of myself, Catherine Cullen (Welsh Harp Ranger – London Wildlife Trust) and Roy Beddard (Welsh harp Conservation Group). We are planning to conduct a meeting/site visit on the 1<sup>st</sup> February. “

“I have received some feedback from our Fisheries enforcement officer who visited the welsh Harp on 11<sup>th</sup> January.

In reference to appropriate signage for enforcement purposes (see below) - he only found those (attached) in close proximity to, and either side of Cool Oak lane bridge west side. There was no mention of the site being a protected site –SSSI.

He did find evidence of fishing on the northern reservoir – silk stream, where bivvies (fishing tents) had been erected for overnight fishing. There is we believe an interest in catching the carp in this waterbody. Apparently on the angling grapevine there are rumoured to be a few but quite big carp here – in excess of 30lbs – so attractive to specimen hunters. These are likely to be serious fishermen - so would probably have rod licences. He also found evidence of fires and potential fishing from less ‘professional’ anglers along the north bank of the main body of the reservoir.

The signage , and fishing activity, appears to be from land within the Borough of Barnet. There are reference points (signage here) which the fishermen would have passed (and ignored) en route to their position on the northern reservoir.

Prosecuting fishermen for fishing without landowner consent (even if they possess rod licences) is down to the land owner and a civil action. Either Canal & River trust or LB of Barnet should enforce this. It is not for constabulary or EA to do.”

Mr Shepherd said that he has reported rough sleepers in the Neasden recreation side to Brent. Mr Williams acknowledged that there has been one report and which had been dealt with.

Recommendation: unanimously agreed the recommendation.

It was therefore **RESOLVED:**

**That the Committee considered and noted the contents of this report and made comments on the contents of the report.**

Mr Beddard added that there have been issues with damage done to the bird hide behind Woolmead Avenue. The door was open and the locks were broken. He is not certain if the damage was caused by the rough sleepers; it could have been vandalism. He tried to contact SNTs but there was no response. This happened either on Saturday afternoon or Monday morning. Ms Sawyer agreed to raise the matter with the SNTs (**Action:** Ms Sawyer).

## **6. LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT-WELSH HARP MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Mr Williams introduced the report which related to the London Borough of Brent Welsh Harp Management Plan.

He outlined that Brent have undertaken an exercise to look at areas of habitats and there seems to be an increase in reed beds but a reduction in marshland.

Regarding rough sleepers there had been one report.

Mr Sawyer also added that the healthy walks programme continues at the reservoir.

Councillor Hart said that the redevelopment of Brent Cross and those attractive aspects of it will be returned to its natural shape.

Mr Shepherd asked whether Brent was planning to look at the erosion of the beach. The Chairman requested that this should be reported at the next Committee meeting and Leslie agreed to report this at the next meeting (**Action: Mr Williams**).

Councillor Langleben invited the resident Ms Jackeline Parsons to make a comment.

Ms Parsons addressed the Committee and said that she lives very near the small lake by the Welsh Harp and referred to an incident that happened a few months ago regarding a floating dead swan. Ms Parsons said the swan was floating for weeks and it was distressing. She also raised the issue of security as there is abuse on the Welsh Harp, it was not safe to walk on one's own and mentioned that the fence in the Silkstream by the park had been smashed again. There have been previous incidents with dead swans. She had contacted several agencies but no one helped.

She received a call from Sanctuary and they said that if she took the swan there, they could establish how it died.

Ms Parsons also mentioned that there are rough sleepers around the Staples Corner area. Residents can also hear gun shots during the night.

She also requested that protection needs to be provided to these animals because they are having a rough time. She also mentioned that there is illegal fishing, bonfires, swimming and barbecues taking place.

Mr Shepherd agreed with the points that Ms Parsons raised and he added that foxes kill swans and people fish them and consume them.

The Chairman responded to Ms Parsons said that the Committee has noted the points she raised and will investigate to see what can be done.

Mr Shepherd requested for patrols in that area now that there is no breeding taking place.

Mr Hider mentioned that if there is a dead swan during the breeding season taking a boat through would cause a number of young bird casualties if someone intervenes. It was agreed that during the March-June period Mr Shepherd can contact Mr Beddard to see how to best approach such incidents.

Mr Cohen asked whether Mr Shepherd could help to remove some of the debris that exists. Mr Shepherd responded that they are already picking logs and they would be happy to do so if needed however, they are not allowed to go near the margins of the Harp.

Mr Beddard mentioned that there is excessive debris in the eastern marsh and he is not sure whether the boats could deal with that. This is a responsibility for contractors rather

than volunteers. There is also natural debris in the Harp and this is not an easy task. They can work along the edge but not far in.

Mr Shepherd added that this is what the management plan should be addressing. He also suggested that an efficient method would be using a hovercraft.

The Chairman asked Brent Council what are the possibilities of getting professional help. Brent agreed to provide a report to the next meeting regarding Brent's policy for removing dead animals from the Reservoir. (**Action:** Mr Williams)

**The Committee noted the Welsh Harp Management Plan from the London Borough of Brent.**

## **7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

(1) Mr Cohen asked Mr Beddard what are the measurements of the rafts in the new reserve in Hackney because they are looking into building some rafts.

He also asked whether there are any chestnut trees because there is a particular moth on the leaf of the chestnut which is causing a disease and is damaging the growth of conkers and strength of chestnut tree. He requested if the leaves could be cleared up and composted. The Chairman requested to include this in the next report to the Committee. (**Action:** Ms Sawyer)

(2) Mr Cohen added that it was agreed in a previous occasion that any Committee reports should be sent by post in advance of the meeting so that they can be considered internally.

(3) There is a rough sleeper issues, fishing issues and Mr Cohen requested that a leaflet be produced so that this can be given to rough sleepers in order to make them aware on what the position is and they would be punished.

The Allotment society added that not all issues on the Welsh Harp are caused by rough sleepers.

The Chairman requested Barnet officers to look at the issue of signage. Ms Sawyer responded that when people are caught in the Harp, their IDs are taken and they need to report to the immigration office to receive those documents back. During operations, all IDs and photographs are recorded. They also get CPN notices when they are caught.

(4) The Chairman welcomed Eric Holroyd from Barratt London. Mr Holroyd a copy of presentation slides and offered an update to the Committee on the West Hendon regeneration.

The majority of demolition has been undertaken. After demolition is finished Barratt will start building phase 3b in the new year. Phases 3b and 3c are due to complete in late 2018, this is a 18 months building programme.

Planning condition 40 requires monitoring of the potential construction-related noise on water birds associated with Welsh Harp and particularly Great Crested Grebe. Initial monitoring found no evidence on breeding or wintering waterfowl. The mitigation and monitoring strategy was agreed with LBB/Natural England in 2013 and included monitoring in 2 locations overlooking the northern arm of the Welsh Harp.

Although no significant demolition took place in 2014, and no planning condition requirement Barratts voluntarily continued monitoring in 2015-2016.

Mr Holroyd outlined the outcomes of the report and explained that the great crested grebe continued to breed successfully in the northern arm of the reservoir during the monitoring period (2015-16). There have been no behavioural responses by great crested grebe to noise stimuli recorded during the monitoring period. The evidence was minimal regarding significant disturbance to other waterfowl that could be attributed to construction-related noise. Noise data indicated that baseline noise levels are relatively high and as result of this, construction work beginning and ending does not significantly change the noise profile at the Welsh Harp. These findings provide no evidence that indicates that the integrity of the Welsh Harp has been affected as a result of development at West Hendon and this conclusion is consistent with the previous monitoring report (PBA 2015)

Planning condition 42 requires monitoring of the potential effects of recreational noise on water birds associated with Welsh Harp and particularly on the Great Crested Grebe.

The approach to monitoring was agreed with Natural England in September 2015.

The monitoring included visits during winter months (2015/16) and during the first breeding season (March-July 2016) prior to the first occupation of phase 3A in June 2016. Surveys were also completed every 2 weeks during the winter and the breeding season from six survey locations. The data collected established that recreational activity in the areas adjacent to the SSSI including walking, feeding birds and dog walking, with boating activity was limited to the southern part of the reservoir.

No recreational disturbance was noted to great crested grebe during the breeding season and there is no evidence that the integrity of the SSSI is currently being eroded by recreational disturbance. There was no evidence to suggest that recreational disturbance events significantly affect the breeding or wintering waterfowl communities. Species found to be subject to disturbance were common and ubiquitous waterfowl attracted into certain areas of the reservoir to benefit from artificial feeding. These congregations of birds, close to the publically accessible areas of the bank, are inevitably periodically disturbed by people and their dogs.

Surface water drainage system is designed to ensure the flows from the redevelopment site are controlled and do not exceed those pertaining to the original site for all storm events up to an including the 1 in 100yr event with a 20% allowance for climate change. This is achieved using a flow control device to 289l/s which is below the calculated peak flow from the existing development of 303l/s. Excess rainfall in exceedance events will temporarily be stored within the attenuation tank and released at a steady rate no greater than the peak design rate of 289l/s. In addition to increasing the lag time between rainfall and discharge the system treats the rain water to improve the quality of the water entering the Welsh Harp.

Mr Holroyd added that they aim to create as minimal disturbance as possible with the creation of the bridge. Regarding the attenuation tank there no live data was available. They have installed one attenuation tank to date and would install five more. The Chairman asked Mr Holroyd to clarify where is the attenuation tank situated. Mr Holroyd indicated the location of the attenuation tank is shown in the master plan.

Ms Johnson asked how many trees were being demolished. Mr Holroyd responded that this information is not available but can be reported back at the next meeting. (**Action:** Barratts)

Mr Johnson also asked whether the bridge is being extended. Mr Holroyd responded that they are creating a DDA compliant bridge that is why it's being extended.

Mr Johnson also added that a lorry went past the bridge a few weeks ago. Mr Holroyd responded that this has been reported to the local authority and that it is the responsibility of the local authority.

Mr Beddard asked when the damage in the old bridge going to be repaired. Mr Holroyd added that they reported that incident to the local authority and there was some work done but not sure whether that is relevant to the incident that Mr Beddard was referring to. The Chairman requested Mr Johnson to provide a copy of the photo of the damage on the bridge. Mr Holroyd agreed to send correspondence regarding the bridge incident and the Chairman agreed to take this forward. (**Action:** Cllr Khatri)

Mr Holroyd also added that for the bridge and the second bridge, the applications will be submitted and there will be a statutory consultation. If they can they will try and avoid breeding season.

Mr Hider asked how far out from the bridge is the pedestrian bridge and Mr Holroyd clarified that they are going to expand the bridge 45 metres. Mr Hider asked why there is a cycling requirement for the bridge and Mr Holroyd responded that this is a S106 requirement. They had a pre-application with the Environment Agency. Councillor Agha, added that this discussion has already taken place when the planning permission was considered.

Mr Cohen responded that he didn't think that the planning application has been agreed. Mr Cohen also asked in order to avoid disturbance that the bridge should be built outside of the breeding season.

Councillor Langleben asked whether the developer is providing any education on the SSSI on the Welsh Harp and what measures are in place for bin collections since the Welsh Harp will be used more by residents.

Mr Holroyd said that Barratts is launching the community space on their website where people can raise their views and concerns. Ms Cullen said that they should get more people involved in the area.

Mr Hider asked when will they send a local welcome pack to new residents and whether there is a way to add information about the welsh harp.

Mr Holroyd responded that this is very important and that there is a possibility to add this information for existing and new residents. They would also research on what groups live around the area.

## **8. ANY OTHER ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT**

The Chairman reminded the Committee that the next meeting is on 14 March 2017.

The meeting finished at 21:20.