

DECISIONS OF THE WELSH HARP JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

3 May 2007

Councillor Christopher Harris (Barnet) (Chairman)
*Councillor Mary Farrell (Vice-Chairman) (Brent)

Councillors:

Mark Cummins (Brent)
*John Hart (Barnet)
*Julie Johnson (Barnet)
Will Motley (Brent)
James O'Sullivan (Brent)
*Hugh Rayner (Barnet)

Organisation

Barnet Council for Sport and Recreation
Birchen Grove Residents' Association
Brent Sports Council
British Waterways
English Nature
Environment Agency
Hendon Rifle Club
Local Agenda 21
London Wildlife Trust
London Wildlife Trust
Old St Andrew's Residents' Association
Princes Park Youth Football Club
Strategy Directorate of Greater London Assembly
Training Ship Broadsword
Welsh Harp Conservation Group
Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre
Welsh Harp Sailing Association
Welsh Harp Youth Sailing Base
West Hendon Community Forum
Woolmead Residents' Association

Representative

* Frank Hewlett
Dorothy Jakes
David Carter
Vacancy
Alex Machin
Martin Everett
Peter Castle
* Molly Savage
* Clive Cohen
* John Colmans
John Thompson
Jon Bell
Mike Waite
Commander G F Beck
Roy Beddard
Harry Mackie
* Brian Turgoose
Vacancy
* Judy Shepherd
* Geoffrey Johnson

*denotes Member present

\$ Denotes Member absent on Council Business

Also in attendance were

Matthew Mardling – Barnet Greenspaces Service

Jonathan Regal – Barnet Democratic Services

Leslie Williams – Brent Parks Service

1. MINUTES (Item 1)

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 February 2007 be approved as a true and accurate record.

2. MATTERS ARISING (Item 2)

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

3. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS (Item 3)

Apologies for absence were received from the Chairman, Councillor Christopher Harris (Barnet), Councillor Mark Cummins (Brent), Dorothy Jakes (Birchen Grove Residents' Association), Roy Beddard (Welsh Harp Conservation Group), and Harry Mackie (Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre). Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor John Hart (Barnet) who was on Council business.

4. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS (Item 4)

No interests were declared.

5. PUBLIC SPEAKING ARRANGEMENTS (Item 5)

No members of the public had asked to address the Committee. The Chair, Councillor Mary Farrell, allowed Judy Shepherd (West Hendon Community Forum) to speak to the Committee on her tabled paper regarding the enforcement of the Bye-Laws by Barnet Council.

Judy Shepherd (West Hendon Community Forum) said that the litter and alcohol related litter had increased from the large numbers who visit the area every day. Councillor Julie Johnson considered that clearance of litter was very slow. Matthew Mardling replied that there were litter picks 2/3 times per week. The Chair asked whether the collection of rubbish could be investigated as it seemed that litter was not picked following the weekends. Matthew Mardling replied that litter picks occurred on or following the weekend but could not be more frequent due to the lack of resources.

Councillor Julie Johnson felt that there were particular enforcement problems regarding barbeques. Judy Shepherd agreed that barbeques were a problem but felt that dedicated enforcement was required.

Councillor Rayner asked whether the responsibility for litter on the water margins lay with British Waterways. It was thought that British Waterways had some responsibility.

Brian Turgoose (Welsh Harp Sailing Association) was concerned with the problems of enforcement by Brent Council against parties.

Councillor Rayner asked whether the problem was that visitors were unaware of the Bye-Laws and that many thought they were not doing anything wrong. Councillor Johnson took the view that this was an enforcement issue and that uniformed officers were required as visitors were ignoring signs with icons that say barbeques were not allowed.

Clive Cohen (London Wildlife Trust):

- asked whether polluters could be educated on the environment and conservation.
- informed the Committee that the Art of Living Foundation was prepared to visit the Welsh Harp to help with the clearing litter from the water in the late Summer and that he would give Officers their contact details.
- asked whether Barnet Council could give resources to Brent to enable its Park Rangers to enforce the Bye-Laws throughout the Welsh Harp. The Chair considered this was unlikely due to pressure of work on the Ranger Service.

At the suggestion of the Chair, the Committee agreed that:

- (1) Barnet Council be requested to enforce the Bye-Laws with an enforcement officer from April to September at weekends and bank holidays at times between noon and 6pm.
- (2) Clive Cohen give the contact details of the Art of Living Foundation to Officers.

6. WELSH HARP MANAGEMENT PLAN (BRENT) (Item 6)

Leslie Williams presented a progress report from Brent’s Director of Environment and Culture detailing progress on the Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan and related issues.

The Committee were verbally informed that:

- a) The Welsh Harp Management Plan was on the Brent Council internet site.
- b) The coppicing of the willow and other tree growth on the southern side of the reservoir (Neasden Recreation Ground) was to allow views across the reservoir, but still be on the edge to make sailing easier.
- c) British Waterways were investigating companies with licenses in the area who may have been involved in waste tipping and other pollution on land north of the North Circular Road Industrial Estate (zone 4c).
- d) It was hoped that Brent Council would achieve Green Flag status for the Welsh Harp Open Space. If this was successful, it was hoped to extend this to the Neasden Recreation Ground the following year.
- e) Brent Council’s Biodiversity Action Plan was expected to go to Committee in the coming months.
- f) The annual Kingsbury and Welsh Harp Reservoir Open Day on 28 May would include a nature walk.
- g) A memorial tree planting for Mike Manuel would be held on 17 May at Birchen Grove.

John Colmans (London Wildlife Trust) enquired whether there were any likely prosecutions by the Environment Agency in the area. Leslie Williams replied that the Environment Agency were currently working with owners and occupiers and that any prosecutions would be based on the outcomes of that work.

RESOLVED – That the progress report on the Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan and related issues be noted.

7. WELSH HARP MANAGEMENT PLAN (BARNET) (Item 7)

Matthew Mardling verbally informed the Committee that:

- a) The draft byelaws had been sent to the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and that their consultation period ended on 15 March 2007. Barnet Council were now waiting for the Secretary State for confirmation.
- b) The suggested mural by school children at the new bird hide was not going ahead due to safety considerations. The hide had been painted brown to stop graffiti.
- c) The Welsh Harp Conservation Group and Barnet Council’s Greenspaces collaborated on a successful bid for £9,000 of funding. The following works had been completed:

Habitat Works

1 Main Hide willow coppice and pollarding
2 Small hide willow coppice
3 Spit willow clearance
4 Island willow coppice and vegetation brush cutting
5 Dump slope and North Marsh willow clearance
6 Bowling Green Pool willow clearance

Visitor facilities

1. Bird Hide improvements and upgrades
2. Allotment footpath clearance

Infrastructure

1. Anti-motorcycle barriers (x2)
2. Litter bins
3. Relocate visitor sign boards

However, the spraying of Japanese knotweed had been dropped as low levels of growth made this treatment ineffective at this time of year.

- d) The Council had been expecting a large Iranian community event to take place without consent on 1 April. Park Keepers and the Principal Parks and Open Spaces Manager attended the Welsh Harp. Between 50 and 100 people had been found to be on the site but no disorder was witnessed. However, a few barbecues were requested to be extinguished and all individuals complied with the request.

Councillor Rayner asked whether there had been a police presence for the Iranian community event. Matthew Mardling answered that there was some police presence but not as large as Scratchwood Open Space which had experienced parking problems on the A1(M) in previous years. Judy Shepherd said that large numbers of Iranians had attended the event. Matthew Mardling estimated that there had been 50-100 many less than the 3/4000 that had gone to Scratchwood in previous years.

Councillor Rayner asked whether the motorcycle barriers had been erected. Judy Shepherd said that motorcyclists had recently been on the Welsh Harp. Matthew Mardling replied that he would investigate whether the barriers had been erected.

8. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS (Item 8)

At the suggestion of the Chair, the Committee agreed that the scheduled date of the next meeting be changed from 31 to 17 July.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (Item 9)

Request from Welsh Harp Sailing Association to terminate membership

Brian Turgoose (Welsh Harp Sailing Association) was concerned that there had been a request to terminate Welsh Harp Sailing Association's membership as he had not requested it. Jonathan Regal apologised for the error. At the suggestion of the Chair, the Committee agreed that the agenda be amended.

10. ANY OTHER ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT (Item 10)

West Hendon Safer Neighbourhood Team

In accordance with paragraph G 2.(i) of the Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee's Constitution, the Chair invited PC Sandy Marwick to say a few words about the work the West Hendon Safer Neighbourhood Team were doing on the Welsh Harp. PC Marwick explained that the West Hendon Safer Neighbourhood Team:

- a) Had a team of 9 officers.
- b) Visited the Welsh Harp on 1 in 3 weekends and usually visited the car park as there had previously been damage to cars parked there.

Councillor Julie Johnson said that she was happy that the West Hendon Safer Neighbourhood Team visited the Welsh Harp but understood that anti-social behaviour was the priority for the team. PC Sandy Marwick replied that the team would visit the Welsh Harp if they are able to.

Councillor Rayner asked whether the West Hendon Safer Neighbourhood Team could enforce the Bye-Laws such as stopping visitors having barbeques. PC Sandy Marwick replied that the Bye-Laws were a civil matter but the team had always got a good response when asking visitors to extinguish their barbeques as most visitors claimed ignorance. The team would only arrest those who were acting disorderly.

Environment Agency works

Clive Cohen tabled an e-mail he had received from the Environment Agency on their progress at the Welsh Harp. The e-mail stated that:

- a) The section of banking close to John Pascalis Ltd had been cleared of fly-tipped rubbish by British Waterways. Further clearance by British Waterways of fly-tipping was scheduled over the next 2 years. However, the Environment Agency was doing a land registry search for the owners to enable them to write to the owners and businesses to ensure compliance as the priority was to stop any further tipping.
- b) The land registry search would also determine who was responsible for the drains and help with pollution caused by private drainage. The Environment Agency would be visit the stonecutters on 8 May to investigate whether their discharged water quality had improved and whether there were any other misconceptions.

Clive Cohen enquired whether there were any grants to help with the clean-up. Leslie Williams replied that there were grants available to community groups but not the Council, British Waterways or the Environment Agency.

Clive Cohen (London Wildlife Trust) said

- the Breathing Spaces grant scheme had been modified recently and it would be easier to achieve grant funding.
- enquired whether Barnet or Brent Council could approach the companies to help pay the costs of the clean-up. Leslie Williams said that the Councils would wait for the Environment Agency to complete its work.

Councillor Rayner asked whether the Environment Agency could give an indication of when and what works were taking place. Clive Cohen enquired whether Brent Council could get an update on the day of the meeting on what the Environment Agency had done. Leslie Williams agreed that he would contact the Environment Agency to get an update position that would be tabled at the next meeting.

Councillor Rayner asked whether the Environment Agency and British Waterways be contacted directly before the meeting to attend future meetings. The Chair asked the respective Barnet and Brent Environment Officers contact their contacts at the Environment Agency and British Waterways to get someone to attend future meetings.

At the suggestion of the Chair, the Committee agreed that:

- (1) Leslie Williams contact the Environment Agency to get an update position that would be tabled at the next meeting.
- (2) Barnet and Brent Environment Officers ask their contacts at the Environment Agency and British Waterways to get someone to attend future meetings.

Proposed re-use of the northern arm of the Welsh Harp as a sailing base

John Colmans asked whether it was true that the Sea Cadets had proposed to use the northern arm of the Welsh Harp as a sailing base. Matthew Mardling replied that the Sea Cadets had applied to Barnet Council and that a lease had been granted subject to suitable health and safety conditions and indemnity to the Council.

John Colmans said that the London Wildlife Trust and Natural England were very concerned as this area had become a habitat for birds and had increased in conservation value since the original sailing base closed. Councillor Julie Johnson was surprised that the Council had agreed to the re-opening without consulting the Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee.

Frank Hewlett (Barnet Council for Sport and Recreation) said that the Sea Cadet Corp were members of the Welsh Harp Sailing Association and considered that they did not need access to the northern arm. Brian Turgoose (Welsh Harp Sailing Association) maintained that the Sea Cadets were a private organisation that had broken away from the main Sea Cadet Corp.

Brian Turgoose (Welsh Harp Sailing Association) asked whether the Sea Cadets had approached British Waterways for permission to use the northern arm. Matthew Mardling said that Barnet Council had sailing rights over the water from the former sailing base. However, some members of the Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee thought that Barnet Council had surrendered the lease. The Chair asked Matthew Mardling to investigate whether Barnet Council still had the lease.

Councillor Rayner enquired who gave the consent for the proposal. Matthew Mardling replied that it was the Director of Environment and Transport. The Committee asked that the Director of Environment and Transport contact the Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee to give a position statement on the proposal.

The London Wildlife Trust representatives maintained that the northern arm was an important bird sanctuary and that any disturbance was unacceptable, and considered that the Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee should be consulted before a decision was made.

At the suggestion of the Chair, the Committee agreed that:

- (1) Barnet Council be asked to investigate whether it still had the lease to the land from where the Sea Cadets proposed to use as a sailing base at the northern arm of the Welsh Harp.
- (2) Barnet Council's Director of Environment and Transport be requested to contact the Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee to give a position statement on the proposal to re-use of the northern arm of the Welsh Harp as a sailing base for the Sea Cadets.

The meeting ended at 8.34pm