



Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee

Tuesday 13 November 2007

Report from the Director of Environment and Culture

For Information

Wards Affected:
ALL

Welsh Harp Management Plan

Forward Plan Ref:

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report presents progress on the Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan and related issues. The Management Plan is jointly managed by the three main local land-holding organisations: Brent Council, British Waterways, and the London Borough of Barnet.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the Report.
- 2.2 Members are asked to agree the reviewed Management Plan.

3.0 Detail

Welsh Harp Management Plan

- 3.1 The Welsh Harp / Brent Reservoir Management Plan is administered by officers of the land owning and land managing organisations. Annual reviews, undertaken near to July each year, are reported to Committee for their recommendations. Since 2001 this has included the additional responsibilities of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 in relation to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- 3.2 The Management Plan was signed by English Nature (now Natural England) on 15 May 2003. Subsequent amendments have been reported to this Committee. Natural England have indicated that there is no need to seek their consent for minor changes to the Management

Plan. The current version of the Management Plan is available on the internet at www.Brent.gov.uk/parks . A map of the zones is also provided on the internet; and is attached to this report.

- 3.3 At the previous meeting of the Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee (17 July 2007) a version of the Management Plan was present that updated that agreed by the Committee in early 2006. A copy of the revised version is available on the Brent Council website. Subject to any amendments required since July 2007, the Committee's approval of the revised Management Plan is sought.
- 3.3.1 It should be noted that the Management Plan does not include or propose changes to zone 2 north of Cool Oak Lane concerning the balance between recreation and nature conservation.

Management works

- 3.4.1 At the previous meeting of the Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee (WHJCC) information was requested on the number of litter and dog waste bins, collection frequencies, and the condition of information boards at Neasden Recreation Ground. The following information is provided:
- Litter bins: There are 20 litter bins at Neasden Recreation Ground and these bins are emptied on Mondays, Fridays and at the weekends, and more frequently if required.
- Dog waste bins: Currently there is one dog waste bin near to the Neasden Recreation Ground car park; two further bins have been lost to theft and/or vandalism. The dog waste bins are emptied twice a week by contractors to Brent Council Parks Service. The missing dog waste bins will be replaced when funding becomes available.
- Notice boards: There are three notice boards at Neasden Recreation Ground, all of which are repeatedly covered in graffiti. The graffiti is removed as soon as possible by staff of Brent Council Parks Service. Following vandalism to the front panel of the notice board adjacent to the car park, the front panel was replaced with a new panel in about June 2007, but the new panel had been vandalised by 24 July 2007. The panel of the notice board will be replaced when funding becomes available.
- 3.4.2 A number of unauthorised raves were held or potentially would have been held at the Welsh Harp since the last meeting of the Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee. These were on the weekends of:
- 6 August 2007: 0130 hours to late afternoon. Wardens from Brent Council Parks Service were called to this incident and in turn contacted the Police.
- 11-12 August 2007: Brent Council Parks Service had staff on duty and turned away ravers as they arrived. Consequently the rave did not proceed.
- 25-26 August 2007: This was thwarted by combined pre-planning and actions between Barnet Council, Brent Council and the Police.

Dam wall works

- 3.5 The reinstatement of the grassland area in Neasden Recreation Ground to the south of the dam wall was completed. Full grass establishment has been achieved by the contractors to British Waterways and the land has been handed back to Brent Council Parks Service.

British Waterways

- 3.6 British Waterways are working with Brent Council and local residents to carry out some clearance works on the Brent Canal Feeder immediately south of the outfall from the Reservoir. (Brent Environmental Health are also involved with this project and report that the Community Clean-Up Day will be held on Saturday 10 November from 0930 to 1400 hours. The event is taking place at Braemar Avenue near to the access to the Canal Feeder. For more details please contact Donna Austin-Walker tel: 020 8937 5252, e-mail: env.health@brent.gov.uk). This is part of a larger project to achieve a proper maintenance agreement for the whole of the Canal Feeder.

The initial clearance of fly-tipping in the Site of Special Scientific Interest on the southern side of the Reservoir bordering the North Circular Road was carried out last year and the second phase will occur in conjunction with the Canal Feeder works identified above.

British Waterways also report that community groups may be able to obtain grant funding for the creation and management of ponds from The Waterways Trust with grants of £1,000 (to £2,000). Grants for larger biodiversity projects may also be available from a scheme recently announced by the SITA Trust.

Environment Agency

- 3.7 For the Environment Agency, Welsh Harp issues are led by the Brent and Crane Environment Management Team. They have been invited to provide an update to the Committee.

Green Flag Award application

- 3.8 Following the unsuccessful application for an award, feedback comments from the Green Flag Award judges were provided (see the Appendix to this report); some of which could be equally applicable to the Welsh Harp area as a whole. The Parks Service will consider the judges recommendations for a possible future Green Flag application for the Welsh Harp Open Space.

Biodiversity Action Plan

- 3.9 The Executive of Brent Council approved an updated Brent Biodiversity Action Plan in August 2007. The Biodiversity Action Plan serves as the geographic area of the local authority; and as the Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan for the Council. The Corporate BAP also includes the responsibilities of the Council in respect of the Biodiversity Duty. The BAP is available on the Brent Council website.

Heritage Lottery Award

- 3.10 Maintenance of the Heritage Lottery Fund award project continues.

Events

- 3.11 Brent Council Sports Service have initiated a Healthy Walks Programme. At the Welsh Harp these meet at the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre, Birchen Grove, every Thursday (except on Bank / Public Holidays) from 10am-11am. The walks are 'low to moderate' in pace. The nearest bus routes are numbers 182, 245, 297 and 302. For further details contact Brent Council Sports Service, tel: 020 8937 3707, [www. Brent.gov.uk/sports](http://www.Brent.gov.uk/sports) . The current programme runs until March 2008.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 None specific, but some of the priorities identified in the Management Plan will require additional resources and decisions by, as appropriate, Brent Council, Barnet Council or British Waterways, if they are to be implemented in the future. For Brent Council Parks Service, the Management Plan is implemented and improvements programmed via the Brent Parks Service Parks Strategy, and Service Plan; both of which derive from the Council's Corporate Strategy. Thus implementation is partially dependent upon revenue and capital budgets for grounds maintenance and for parks management. The Parks Service pursues other sources of finance and opportunities for partnership working that may become available.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), land owners or occupiers are required to give notice to and consult with Natural England for any operation in an area of land that is of special interest by reason of any of its flora, fauna, or geological or physiographical features; and Natural England will issue a consent for the works unless the operation is likely to have a significant impact on any of the notified features of interest on the site. CROW (and section 28G of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) places a duty on all public bodies to take

reasonable steps, consistent with the proper exercise of the authority's functions, to further the conservation and enhancement of the site.

- 5.2 It is good practice for land owners or occupiers to produce Management Plans for the SSSI, which when approved by Natural England, enable the carrying out of the works specified in the Management Plan. This can reduce the administrative work inherent in obtaining consent for individual items of management work.
- 5.3 The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 requires that from 1 October 2006 all public authorities in England and Wales have a general duty to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of their functions.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 The proposals in this report have been subject to screening and officers believe that there are no diversity implications.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications

- 7.1 None specific.

8.0 Environmental Implications

- 8.1 The Welsh Harp Management Plan co-ordinates environmental works in the Reservoir area.

Background Papers

Dated correspondence and other documents referred to in the Report including:

Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan.

Equality Impact Assessment Completion Form: Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee: Welsh Harp Reservoir Management Plan: 20 January 2005. Form dated 06b.01.2005.

Contact Officers

Any person wishing to inspect the above papers should contact Mr Leslie Williams, Environmental Policy Officer, Brent Parks Service, 660 Harrow Road, Wembley, Middlesex HA0 2HB. Tel.: 020 8937 5628. E-mail: Leslie.Williams@Brent.gov.uk

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Unit

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 Committee
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Appendix 1: Green Flag Award: Feedback comments from judges: Field Assessment Feedback 31 May 2007

Assessment Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations
A welcoming place	Useful road signs used to direct users to park. Large secure car park available and entrance all accessible with good clear signage. Excellent interpretation and viewing points. Signposts for London ring walk.	Inclusion of contacts of stakeholder groups on welcome signage should be considered. Local community has a significant diverse population that translation of key information might be appropriate. The site water body significance is for its waterfowls and very little information is made about the variety of species that can be seen particularly at the vantage point at main entrance.
Healthy, safe and secure	Mobile and visible warden patrols with on-site seasonal staff. Walking trail (London ring) Measures to tackle flytipping in car parks has reduced problem.	Absence of any water safety equipment or information about risks. A ROSPA risk assessment to determine appropriate measures could be commissioned. Site of old play-area needs improvement as currently seems uninviting and enclosed. Some hard surfaces require resurfacing. Potential trip hazards Progression of access to garden site will 'open the site' and improve perception of boundary security, and increase visitor numbers and provision of facilities. Evidence of BBQs. Possibly by closing car park at dusk should reduce issue of flytipping.
Clean and well maintained	Overall site is tidy and graffiti free. Site furniture well maintained and in reasonable condition. Potential for a variety of habitats.	Some litter was evident including cigarette butts around seating. As rangers also litter pick, it is questionable that enough resources allocated to waste management. Dog fouling is an issue and management seems minimal.

		<p>Clarity on dog control policy as changes to legislation have not been adopted or fully considered.</p> <p>Edging to pathways poorly defined with weeds and grass encroaching on paths in places. Paths and hard surfacing need upgrading.</p>
Sustainability	<p>Dead hedging of brush wood and chipping of wood waste to create pathways. Minimal use of herbicide and pesticide.</p>	<p>Inconsistency of waste recycling policy in management plan as no evidence of composting on site or actual need.</p>
Conservation and heritage	<p>Although the reservoir site is recognised for its habitat and waterfowl as SSI, Harp Open-space has taken steps to also improve its habitat through introduction of scrapes and marginal planting. Variety of habitat from scrub woodland and relaxed grassland management.</p>	<p>Archaeological features not highlighted.</p> <p>Clear objective for habitat management or programme of work for scrub woodland and relaxed grassland needs to be detailed. Site has great potential and appears to have very minimal intervention in management such as rotational clearance of woodland or nurturing of native species. How does the BAP actually translate to site management?</p>
Community involvement	<p>Consultation with wide stakeholder group and good relationship with local business such as the Greenhouse Nursery. Developed activities such as healthy walking programmes to users in the park</p>	<p>Some fantastic work taking place by Welsh Harp Conservation Group and Education Centre, but it is unclear how much is within the Welsh Harp Open Space rather than 'Welsh Harp' or Education Centre grounds. Appears much of the ecological community work takes place outside of the open space. Could develop participatory projects with communities to improve the open space. Sponsorship of park (planting trees/bench) or events could be further developed. Could consider introducing bat boxes, building a hide or nesting rafts although this will need to be approved by British waterways. To further develop the Education</p>

		centre work in using the open-space as outdoor resource by introducing a nature trail from centre through the open space.
Marketing	Useful website with good information about the site and activities.	Site is off the beaten track and secluded. Production of a site-specific leaflet, newsletter etc will help promote site that could be distributed through the nursery as well.
Management	Adequately resourced in terms of staffing and developed an overall vision	Would be useful to have relationship of ecology officer and links to grounds maintenance staff defined, and programme of works to conservation areas specified.
Additional comments	<p>Due to the site is part of larger collection of open-spaces with different ownership there appears to be inconsistency in approaches in management and delivery even at a local Authority level. LBB needs clear objectives (aligned with the overall SSSI aims) for the Welsh Harp Open Space and produce work programmes. Indication of financial budget allocated to each key project/programme will also confirm commitment of LBB to delivery them.</p> <p>Investment is required in site hard standing areas as many are dilapidated. Potential for education centre has not been fully realised.</p> <p>Needs clarity as to how many of the good practices or 'added value' services take place on site.</p>	