

MINUTES OF THE WELSH HARP JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 12th February 2008 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Farrell (Chair, London Borough of Brent), Councillor O'Sullivan (London Borough of Brent), Councillors Hart, Johnson and Rayner (London Borough of Barnet) and

Frank Hewlett (Barnet Council for Sports and Recreation), Peter Castle (Hendon Rifle Club), Molly Savage (Local Agenda 21), Clive Cohen (London Wildlife Trust), Roy Beddard (Welsh Harp Conservation Group), Harry Mackie (Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre), Brian Turgoose (Welsh Harp Sailing Association), Judy Shepherd (West Hendon Community Forum) and Geoffrey Johnson (Woolmead Residents' Association).

Apologies for absence were received from Kate Mitchell (Natural England), and Tara Vernon (Environment Agency).

Also in attendance were Leslie Williams (Brent Parks Service) and Jenny Warren (Greenspaces Manager, Barnet Council).

1. Introductions and Membership

Jenny Warren was introduced as the Greenspaces Manager at Barnet Council and their representative at the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were none declared.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 13th November 2007

RESOLVED:-

that, subject to the inclusion of Frank Hewlett in the list of attendees, the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13th November 2007 be received and approved as an accurate record.

4. Matters Arising

Metropolitan Housing Corporation (MHC)

It was noted that MHC were due to visit the next meeting and the Chair asked all members to consider what issues they would like the MHC representative to cover.

5. Welsh Harp Management Plan (Brent) – update

Leslie Williams introduced an update on the Welsh Harp Management Plan. He reported on a number of activities that had taken place including the coppicing of Willow trees, the relocation of Brent Energy Solutions to the chapel building at the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre, a flood risk assessment and a new survey undertaken by Natural England into the value of the reservoir area as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) with particular reference to bird life and that a list of bird species was available for those who were interested.

It was also reported that, as far as the Parks Service were aware, there had been no more raves or other illegal gatherings taking place since the last meeting.

In addition, following requests for information, Leslie Williams reported that British Waterways were continuing to work to clear fly-tipping from the edge of the site and that they still expected this work to take the three years they stated originally, with one year now having been completed.

A discussion followed during which members of the committee expressed concern about the length of time it was taking British Waterways to tackle the fly-tipping, however it was acknowledged that they were not working more slowly than the targets that they had set for themselves. Members requested that they be kept informed of the progress of the clearance work at future meetings. It was also noted that other clearance works had been undertaken in residential areas as British Waterways had considered these to be of a higher priority.

A further discussion followed regarding trees on the site, it was reported that there was a specific plan to ensure that there were enough trees on the site, with young trees pulled up where they were self sown in the wrong place and that plans existed to replace mature trees should they die off. It was also reported that in areas, in particular near the reed beds, where work had been completed on trees and bushes that not all of the branches and cuttings had been removed properly and that some of the tree stumps had been set alight by vandals. Members also reported that a no swimming sign had been placed near the tadpole pond that wasn't very visible.

Finally the committee were asked to note that the SSSI review had given the site a very good score and an improved rating which was very unusual in a busy suburban area such as North London. The Chair asked that the contribution of everyone involved in the upkeep of the site be recognised by the committee.

RESOLVED:-

that the report be noted.

7. Welsh Harp Management Plan (Barnet) – verbal update

Jenny Warren provided a verbal update on the Welsh Harp Management Plan regarding works undertaken by Barnet Council. In particular she highlighted the new 'No Swimming' signs that had been installed, and promised to investigate to ensure they were sighted correctly, that a new three-year plan to control invasive weeds such as hogweed and knotweed had been launched and that the Council had now received confirmation that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) had now received the proposed new by-laws and that they were hoping to have a response from DEFRA shortly.

A specific issue was highlighted in relation to a bird hide on the site that had been repeatedly vandalised and that the Council were seriously examining a

number of options for the hide, including everything from a more secure metal box hide, through making it an open topped hide right down to removing the hide and installing a viewing platform instead. The members were asked for their views as to what they would like to see and what they thought would prevent future vandalism.

A wide-ranging discussion followed during which a large number of views were expressed however a general consensus emerged that most of the members would prefer to see a reinforced hide with the suggestion that the Council explore the possibility of using something like an all-metal lorry container type box and converting that into a hide. However, members also asked that more details be provided on the various options before the committee took a final view.

Various options were also discussed to reduce vandalism, the main suggestion was to undertake efforts to encourage the use of the hide by local people and in particular local school children so that it became a valued amenity, with some members reporting that efforts to do this were already underway involving local charities and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).

Jenny Warren thanked members for their suggestions and promised to report back to the committee with a more detailed list of options at a future meeting and also warned members that there was only limited funding to support any improvements.

Finally a request was made that both councils look to produce a short update informing the committee as to how the lottery heritage funding had been spent. It was noted that a large number of works had been funded from this money but that it would be useful to have a final list.

RESOLVED:-

that the verbal update be noted.

8. **Planning Issues**

It was noted that if any members of the committee wished to receive automatic planning updates from Brent Planning Services then they could register for email alerts via the Council website.

9. **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Consultative Committee would take place on Tuesday 22nd April 2008.

10. **Any Other Urgent Business**

Metropolitan Housing Trust

Regarding the proposed presentation from the Metropolitan Housing Trust, members requested updates on the timescales for replacing the youth sailing base, the general timetable for their overall project, along with any major

changes since they last reported, and finally the number of trees that had been removed along with any plans for replacements.

Swan Signet Rescue

It was reported for information that an injured swan signet had been rescued after it had been involved in a fight with an adult swan as was now being cared for by a local charity.

The meeting ended at 8:27pm

M FARRELL
Chair

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