

MINUTES OF THE WELSH HARP JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Thursday, 16th July 2009 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Farrell (Chair, London Borough of Brent) and Councillors Corcoran and O'Sullivan (London Borough of Brent) and Councillor Hart and Johnson (London Borough of Barnet) and Roy Beddard (Welsh Harp Conservation Group), Clive Cohen (London Wildlife Trust), Neale Hider (Environment Agency), Geoffrey Johnson (Woolmead Residents Association), Molly Savage (Local Agenda 21), Brian Turgoose (Welsh Harp Sailing Association) and Farzana Yousaf (Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Motley and Wharton (London Borough of Brent) and Councillor Davey and Councillor Rayner (London Borough of Barnet) and John Colmans (London Wildlife Trust) and Kate Mitchell (Natural England)

Also in attendance was Jenny Warren (Barnet Parks Service) and Leslie Williams (Brent Parks Service).

1. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

Nominations were invited for the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair for the municipal year. Following nominations, Councillor Farrell was elected Chair and Councillor Hart was elected Vice-Chair of the Joint Consultative Committee for the municipal year 2009/10.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were none declared.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 31 March 2009

RESOLVED:-

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 31 March 2009 be received and approved as an accurate record subject to the following being noted:

On page 5 of the minutes under an action heading, it was stated "that Councillor Julie Johnson organise volunteers to count the number of visitors during the summer." However, whilst Councillor Johnson made a suggestion that the number of visitors be counted over the summer, she did not volunteer to organise this.

4. Matters Arising

Display of the Welsh Harp

Councillor Hart explained to the committee that the displays, for exhibition in schools, were being prepared and should be ready for September. He suggested that it would be a good idea for a reminder to be sent out.

Use of pesticides and herbicides

Councillor Hart informed the committee that a question was presented at the last Barnet council meeting which asked what the annual costs of using

pesticides and herbicides were a year. He suggested that Brent Council might want to ask a similar question at a council meeting.

5. **Welsh Harp Reservoir Management Plan (Brent)**

Leslie Williams (Brent Park Services) introduced his report which provided an update on the progress of the Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan and related issues.

Leslie Williams explained that the Management Plan was undergoing an annual review and that members of the committee were being asked to send any comments that they have to him by email. He pointed out that the deadline for comments was the 31st of July, but that the deadline date was somewhat flexible.

Following a request at the last meeting for information on the number of visitors to the Welsh Harp, Leslie Williams provided the committee with figures from the 2008 annual Parks Customer Survey. He explained that according to the 2008 survey there was an estimated 447,696 visits to the Welsh Harp during the year prior to the survey. He emphasised that the figures were an estimate rather than an actual count and warned that not everyone would have been aware of the exact boundaries which were being referred to. He also highlighted that if the same person visited twice in one day it would have been counted as two visits.

Leslie Williams explained that unfortunately British Waterways were not present and therefore were unable to give the committee an update on the clean-up of the southern side of the reservoir. However, he did make the committee aware of a meeting which took place between council officers and British Waterways and the Environment Agency in June, where the possibility of the annual monitoring, through an annual site visit, of the woodland and marshland between the North Circular was discussed. He explained how the issue of swimming was also discussed at the June meeting and emphasised that whilst wardens do not have responsibility for the water as this was British Waterways' responsibility, wardens would warn anyone they see swimming. Wardens would also be used in an advisory capacity to deter fishing.

Leslie Williams informed the committee that the Brent Reservoir (Welsh Harp) had been assessed by Brent to have scored for the National Indicator 197. He stated that it was among the 34% of sites in Brent which were found to have scored positively for conservation management. Following the request from the committee for clarification on the inclusion of the Brent Reservoir Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in National Indicator 197, he explained that the advice from Natural England, the GLA and the London Boroughs Biodiversity Forum was that, in London, the areas of Local Nature Reserves should be included within the assessment of NI 197 except where the same land was also a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Therefore the land included in the NI 197 assessment was that part of the Welsh Harp Site of Importance for Nature Conservation that was beyond the SSSI boundary.

Leslie Williams made the committee aware of upcoming events in the Welsh Harp. He also advised the committee that 'Walk the Capital Ring' leaflets had been updated mostly to reflect new contact details. The leaflets for section 9 and 10 were made available for committee members. Furthermore, he

informed members that SULTRANS had published the results of their consultation on proposed 'Greenways'. He explained that the controversial proposal to create an eastern path through sensitive habitats had been removed. He highlighted the other route proposals which had remained, including a proposed route by the Dam Wall.

In the discussion which followed, the committee were informed that someone had been responsible for killing cignets on the Graham Park Estate. A concern was raised that the person responsible was taken in by the police but was not charged. A concern was also raised that there was a persistent offender who continued to fish in the reservoir and that there was no one able to prevent it. Following a question on the dangers of swimming in the Welsh Harp Reservoir, the committee discussed what the reasons were for it being dangerous. The reasons mentioned included deep water, strength of the current and the presence of a large amount of weed and algae.

RESOLVED:-

that the report be noted.

6. **Welsh Harp Management Plan (Barnet)**

Jenny Warren (Barnet Parks Service) provided the committee with a verbal update on issues related to the Welsh Harp Reservoir Management Plan. She confirmed Leslie Williams's interpretation of the National Indicator 197 and informed the committee that Barnet had adopted the same policy. She stated that in Barnet, 36% of sites were found to have scored positively for conservation management.

Following a request from the committee at the last meeting regarding the introduction of a barbecue area, Jenny Warren explained that benchmarking had been carried out with other Local Authorities and that a report would be going to the next Hendon Area Environment Sub-Committee for consideration. In response to the committee's concern, raised during the last meeting, over unwanted fisherman using the pontoon at the old sailing base to fish, she informed the committee that she had spoken to Children Services as to how to prevent access to the platoon. It was asked whether the pontoon could be removed so as to prevent it from being used for fishing. Jenny Warren stated that she would investigate this and would report back to the next meeting.

In response to a request for an update on the Bird Hide, it was reported that the funding had been secured, that contractors had been employed and that it should be built within the next two months. A suggestion was made by the Welsh Harp Conservation Group that this be delayed until the Autumn. Following a request for an update on the eradication of the Japanese Knotweed, the committee were informed that the eradication process was going well and that there was evidence that the programme was clearly having an effect. A debate then followed around whether glyphosate could be sprayed between the months of June and September. Concern over the possible effects of glyphosate and other pesticides on bees was also discussed.

RESOLVED:-

that the verbal update be noted.

7. Planning Issues

There were none.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is Wednesday 11 November 2009.

9. Any Other Urgent Business

Update on the Welsh Harp Environmental Educational Centre

Farzana Yousaf (Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre) informed the committee that the centre was completely booked for the summer and that they had received a lot of interest from schools.

She explained that the centre ran a Healthy Walks Scheme and that the walks were being spoilt by the fact that there was so much dog fouling on the path. The chair suggested that dog wardens could be used to patrol the paths to act as educators.

It was noted that the Welsh Harp Sailing Association was working with the Welsh Harp Environmental Educational Centre to provide children with the chance to take part in canoeing and be on the water. It was hoped that this would fill some of the gap left by the closing down of the Youth Sailing Base. Councillor Johnson thanked the Welsh Harp Sailing Association for carrying out this work and suggested that they should contact her if they required any assistance.

The meeting ended at 8:25 pm

M FARRELL
Chair