

MINUTES OF THE WELSH HARP JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Thursday 19th November 2020 at 7.00 pm

Members Present:

Councillor John Hart	London Borough of Barnet
Councillor Roxanne Mashari	London Borough of Brent
Councillor Helene Richman	London Borough of Barnet
Councillor Anne Clarke	London Borough of Barnet
Councillor Nagus Narenthira	London Borough of Barnet
Councillor Parvez Ahmed	London Borough of Brent
Matthew Gunyon	Greenspaces & Leisure
Leslie Williams	Parks Service, Regeneration & Environ.
Lucy Shuker	Brent River Catchment Partnership
Neil Earnshaw	Canal and River Trust
Dale Langdale	Hendon Rifle Club
Clive Cohen	London Wildlife Trust
Dianne Murphy	London Wildlife Trust
John Shepherd	Welsh Harp Sailing Association
Judy Shepherd	West Hendon Community Forum
Liz Hall	West Hendon Allotment Society
Geoffrey Johnson	Woolmead Residents' Association
Andrew Haines	Welsh Harp Conservation Group
Phil Atkinson	Phoenix Canoe Club
Maria Bailey	Environment Agency
Nathan Smith	Barratt London

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR 2020-2021

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Hart be elected Chairman for the municipal year 2020-2021.

That Councillor Mashari be elected Vice-Chairman for the municipal year 2020-2021.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Saira Don, Amer Agha and George Crane.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 16th of January 2020 were approved subject to an amendment that should include the London Wildlife Trust to the scoping study discussion held on pg. 8, item 10.

4. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND NON PECUNIARY INTERESTS

None.

5. LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT - WELSH HARP MANAGEMENT PLAN

Mr Leslie Williams presented his report. It was noted that works in relation to the speed restriction ramps in Birchen Grove car park and resurfacing of the Silver Jubilee car park had been completed in January.

The action plan highlighted the main issues affecting the Welsh Harp area. Marshland work had been carried out by volunteers from the Welsh Harp Sailing Club on the shore margins of the open space located on the northern Brent side of the reservoir.

The growth of scrubs in the area, which added value to wildlife, had a down side in that it shaded out some of the marshland and affected views of the reservoir. Trees also created a wind shadow. It was intended that species such as Alder and Silver Birch be retained.

Elm and Oak trees that obstructed the views to the reservoir had been removed and litter clearance in the surrounding areas had taken place. The Healthy Walks Programme had recommenced in August and ran weekly with social distancing measures in place.

Most bye laws with regards to cycling had been amended by the Council to encourage the activity. Appendix B showed signage which was implemented in the Neasden recreation ground.

Mr Gunyon noted that he had previously met with Mr Atkinson of the Phoenix Canoe Club and that Barnet Council would consider if works could be completed on the Barnet side to reduce the wind shadowing on the reservoir.

The Chairman thanked Mr Williams and the committee noted the report.

6. LONDON BOROUGH OF BARNET WELSH HARP MANAGEMENT PLAN

Mr Matthew Gunyon highlighted the key points of the report. Issues regarding litter and fly tipping had been raised with the Barnet Community Safety Team. It was noted that installation of CCTV cameras along Cool Oak Lane was still under consideration. Meanwhile, the Street Scene Team had carried out a deep clean along Cool Oak Lane.

Following public consultation, the West Hendon Playing Fields master plan had been reported to, and approved by, the Environment Committee in March. The key changes related to do with the relocation of the car park and the extension to the existing redundant car park in Woodfield park along with the proposed high ropes course.

New pedestrian routes had been included throughout the site and some sports pitches were moved away from the local nature reserve and the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The bird hides had also been placed in more suitable locations. Quotations were being sort for a tarmac surface and court lines for a basketball court. The master plan which was in its business phase was due to be taken forward.

Ms Hall was advised to contact the Parks team with regards to the overgrown tress around the West Hendon allotments site. Ms Murphy commented that overgrown areas were useful for wildlife.

The Chairman thanked Mr Gunyon and the committee noted the report.

7. CANAL RIVER TRUST - UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES IN THE WELSH HARP

Mr Neil Earnshaw informed the committee of the implementation of improved signage and interpretation panels around the reservoir in conjunction with Brent Council. The reservoir statutory inspections were to be carried out in the week commencing 11th

January 2021 to draw down water levels in the reservoir. This would have no impact on aquatic life. The work would allow engineers to inspect the valve house building using divers. The date of completion was estimated to be the 26th February 2021 when water levels would return to normal. CCTV cameras had been installed at the bottom of the embankment to counter trespassing vandalism. An application to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund had been made to tackle Japanese Knotweed along the banks of the reservoir.

It was noted that a collaborative approach would be required to research and build a comprehensive record of flora and fauna life on the Welsh Harp. Information could be found on the Welsh Harp Conservation Group website as a starting point for ensuing research.

8. BARRATT LONDON PROPOSED WORKS - SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST

Mr Nathan Smith informed the committee that the regeneration had gone very well. Mr Smith said that following a discussion with the West Hendon Partnership Board, he noted that residents and visitors would benefit from views of the water throughout the year. It was agreed that some vegetation and scrub would be reduced and a waterside perimeter of approximately 20m in width would be retained around the West Hendon estate.

The representative from Natural England welcomed this reduction of scrub to assist the regeneration of marshland. The project ecologist had advised that no significant loss to trees would occur. The cleared area would not be accessible to the public. Any concerns with regards to fly tipping in that area would be handled by the management company of the estate.

In discussion, members suggested that low level vegetation be planted to maintain the openness of the views and to reduce the regrowth of willow. It was noted that an SSSI officer would be appointed to oversee the development of the proposed works. As part of developers' obligations, quarterly reports from the project ecologist showed no adverse effects on wildlife as a result of the tower block. Mr Shepherd said that the tower block was used as a perch by peregrine falcons.

With regards to the ecological impact on the proposed works, Natural England had been consulted.

The committee was in support of the minor works proposed in the SSSI.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A note of thanks was offered by Councillor Clarke on behalf of the committee to the litter-picking volunteers around the Welsh Harp. The growing problem of rough sleepers in the Welsh Harp was noted. Greenspaces worked closely with the Barnet Homes Rough Sleeper team, Barnet Community Safety and local Police to engage appropriately with individuals to find more suitable lodgings following which clearance of the area would be coordinated. Reporting from local residents was heavily relied upon.

The meeting finished at 8.50pm