

	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Environment and Climate Change Committee</h2> <h3 style="text-align: center;">6<sup>th</sup> September 2022</h3>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Update on the Welsh Harp Vision</b>
<b>Report of</b>	Chair – Environment and Climate Change Committee
<b>Wards</b>	All
<b>Status</b>	Public
<b>Urgent</b>	No
<b>Key</b>	No
<b>Enclosures</b>	None
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### Summary

The Welsh Harp is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in Barnet, which has multi-agency ownership. The Canals and Rivers Trust (CRT) are responsible for Reservoir and the London Borough of Barnet and Brent both have riparian ownership.

In 2021 the consortium of partners and the Greater London Authority (GLA) commissioned the creation of an overarching vision document for the Welsh Harp, including an action plan for the protection and enhancement of the Welsh Harp. The work was also to explore opportunities to secure external funding and to ensure the space is appropriately managed and maintained.

A future vision for the Welsh Harp has been drafted and this report provides an update on the approach to date, engagement, emerging themes and next steps.

### Officers Recommendations

1. That the Environment and Climate Change committee note the approach taken to develop the Welsh Harp Vision, the progress to date and the timescales for the production of the final Welsh Harp Vision.

<p><b>2. That the Environment and Climate Change delegates authority to agree and adopt the Welsh Harp Vision to the Executive Director – Adults, Communities, and Health, in consultation with the Chair of the Environment and Climate Change Committee.</b></p>
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## **1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED**

- 1.1 The Council have been working in partnership with the Canals and Rivers Trust (CRT) and the London Borough of Brent to create a 'Joint Vision' for the future of the Welsh Harp Reservoir.
- 1.2 In 2021 the Council and the Greater London Authority (GLA) funded a commission, led by the CRT, to create and develop a Joint Vision which would explore and reflect local views across both Barnet and Brent on the usage of the site, improvements, what local people would like to see the Welsh Harp become, and possible sources of funding to make the improvements.
- 1.3 A specification was developed by the lead officers from each of the landowners in partnership with the GLA, Thames 21 (Charity that aims to reconnect people to nature by helping them enjoy, protect, and enhance their local rivers.) and the London Wildlife Trust. The specification set out the following outcomes and outputs:

### ***Strategic site assessment and mapping***

- description and assessment of the strategic context of the site in relation to urban regeneration and the wider green infrastructure network, including ecology, catchment management, socio-economic context, recreation and likely changes as a result of regeneration, demographics and climate change
- description and assessment of existing management, governance and resources
- identification of key stakeholders
- stakeholder consultation requirements
- a shared Geographic Information system (GIS) output for stakeholders to clarify key areas of opportunity and sensitivity.

### ***Outline of options for a more integrated strategic approach***

- options for improvement
  - options for significant improvements such as major boundary and entrance enhancements, new habitats, interventions and features, medium term activity programme
  - options for the creation of a destination site for north-west London, setting the long-term management in a wider context
  - a potential (relative) timeline for both short and long-term aspirations based on dependencies and risks
- 1.4 In July 2021, following a competitive exercise the CRT awarded the commission to DK-CM, a practice of architects, researchers and strategists that specialises in spatial, environmental and social change. Following the appointment, DK-CM conducted site surveys and investigations which formed an initial Baseline Study of the site. This included a review of historical, environment and local knowledge to support the formation

of an 'Atlas' that sets out the evidence, mapping and public knowledge that supports the vision.

- 1.5 From September and October 2021 DKCM engaged with local stakeholders across Barnet and Brent, to inform the vision.
- 1.6 Representations were sought through an engagement forum for local people. In addition, local mail-drops, partner websites, a google form and extensive social media content were used. This generated 155 responses including from residents' associations and local groups. In addition, eleven young people were engaged in the form of a dedicated workshop.
- 1.7 In order to benefit from the detailed local knowledge of officers, and key groups such as the Welsh Harp Conservation Group and the Friends of the Welsh Harp, a separate engagement strand, the 'Welsh Harp Joint Atlas' (the Atlas sets out the evidence, mapping and public knowledge that supports the vision) was initiated, beginning with a workshop and facilitated through ConceptBoard (ConceptBoard is an online engagement tool designed to allow for collaborative working) and WhatsApp. This allowed local experts to ensure that the project team's mapping and understanding of the Welsh Harp was accurate and up to date, and also yielded further engagement findings.
- 1.8 The Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee, which includes both councils and the CRT, was kept updated on the progress of the project throughout.
- 1.9 It is anticipated that the vision will address the key themes of place, environment, wellbeing and inclusion. It will also include a series of high-level design scenarios, intended to provide examples of how the vision might develop into tangible projects and strategies. The themes have been developed from the information gathered from people during the engagement phase.
- 1.10 It is anticipated that a final version of the joint vision and action plan will be complete by the end of September 2022.
- 1.11 Once the final version of the Vision has been produced, each of the landowners will need to undertake their own internal process for approval and adoption. As set out in recommendation two, it is proposed that this is done by officers in consultation with the Chair of the Environment and Climate Change Committee.
- 1.12 A public exhibition is planned for the vision in the autumn of 2022 where residents and stakeholders can feed into the action plan.

## **2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 The Welsh Harp and Brent Reservoir are partially owned and managed by the Council, the London Borough of Brent and CRT. The vision seeks to provide a joint statement for how the site should be managed and maintained.

## **3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED**

- 3.1 Do nothing and do not to develop a shared vision. Under the current management arrangement, each of the landowners go about the process of management and maintaining their sections of the Welsh Harp without any shared aims or objectives. This approach means that there is no unified management approach and so can lead to poor use of resources and infrastructure. Through the adoption of a joint vision the landowners can attract additional external funding and deliver improvement to the SSSI and its environs.

## **4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION**

- 4.1 The process of adopting the vision will take place, following the approach set out in recommendation two above. The final vision will be presented to a future meeting of this committee for noting.
- 4.2 Once the Vision has been adopted the Officer Group will finalise the Action Plan, this document will be hosted on the CRT website with links provided from the Councils website. The action plan will be a living document maintained by the Officer Group to ensure it is kept up to date and accurate. The action plan will be monitored by the Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee.
- 4.3 The action plan will include workstreams related to gathering and maintaining an accurate ecology record and baseline for the Welsh Harp, this information will feed directly into the Councils future borough wide Biodiversity Strategy.
- 4.4 The council will continue to work with colleagues from CRT and Brent Council to ensure the Vision and the action plan are delivered to improve and enhance the Welsh Harp.
- 4.5 As set out in section 1.12 of this report a public exhibition will be delivered in the autumn of 2022 and the council will work with the Officer Group to ensure this activity is communicated to residents, users and stakeholders to allow all the opportunity to feed into the Action Plan.

## **5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION**

### **5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance**

#### **5.1.1**

The development of a Joint Vision for the Welsh Harp supports the Council's priorities in relation to delivering and implementing the Sustainability Strategy, Climate Action Plan, Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and Biodiversity Strategy.

### **5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)**

- 5.2.1 The programme of activities listed within this report are delivered within existing resources, some initiatives or tasks may require additional investment which will be considered in the development of new policies and assessed through the Council's budget setting process.
- 5.2.2 Circa £500,000 of Section 106 funding was attributed to the Welsh Harp SSSI in mitigation of the works associated with the West Hendon Estate development, of which circa £170,000 has been spent to date. The remaining funds would be used to deliver improvements within the Barnet boundary aligned to the outcomes and actions of the Vision.
- 5.2.3 In parallel to this the officer group have had some early engagement discussions with the Heritage Lottery Fund about potential funding opportunities which could also include resourcing to assist in delivering any future plans.
- 5.2.4 The Welsh Harp neighbour, the West Hendon Playing Fields is subject to a parallel project to deliver a major investment in improving access to sport and physical activity facilities. When the West Hendon Playing Fields Master Plan was developed the site's connection to the Welsh Harp and its environs was considered an important connection and as such improvements to the pathway network were set out in those plans. The connection is also captured within the vision when looking at connectivity in and around the Welsh Harp site.

### **5.3 Legal and Constitutional References**

- 5.3.1 Local authorities have several different statutory powers in relation to parks and open spaces, including the Public Health Act 1875 (as amended by the Local Government Act 1972) which gave local authorities discretionary power to purchase and maintain public walks or pleasure grounds and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, which gives wide powers to provide recreational facilities.
- 5.3.2 The Open Spaces Act 1906 provides that local authorities may acquire and hold and administer open space in trust to allow the enjoyment of it by the public and shall maintain and keep the open space in a good and decent state.
- 5.3.3 Under article 7.5 of the council's constitution, the Environment and Climate Change Committee's responsibilities include:

Responsibility for all borough-wide or cross-area matters relating to the local environment including parks and open spaces, waterways and biodiversity.

### **5.4 Insight**

- 5.4.1 Information gathered as part of the project will be included within the Vision and accompanying Atlas documents.

### **5.5 Social Value**

- 5.5.1 Barnet was the first London Borough to produce a borough-wide Corporate Natural Capital Account (CNCA) for two hundred of its parks and open spaces. The CNCA provides Barnet's council with an evidence base to quantify the economic, social and

environmental benefits accruing from its green infrastructure assets.

5.5.2 The total value of benefits from our parks over the next 25 years is estimated at £1 billion.

5.5.3 Social Value will play a key role in the delivery of workstreams set out in the Action Plan, building upon and supporting the community groups who are driving the improvement and enhancement of the Welsh Harp.

## **5.6 Risk Management**

5.7 All risks are managed using the council's risk management procedure, as set out in the Corporate Risk Management Framework. High level risks are reported as part of the Council's quarterly performance regime.

## **5.8 Equalities and Diversity**

5.8.1 The Equality Act 2010 outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- b. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- c. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

5.8.2 Relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

5.8.3 The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day-to-day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design policies and the delivery of services. These principles will be adhered to in taking forward this project.

## **5.9 Corporate Parenting**

5.8.1 The council strives to ensure that its open spaces are accessible and suitable for children and young people (CYP) in terms of outdoor recreation. There has been engagement of CYP in the development of the vision through the dedicated workshop. The feedback from this will be used to enable the vision to address the needs of CYP, which includes looked after and care experienced children.

## **5.10 Consultation and Engagement**

5.10.1 Public engagement was undertaken as part of the early phases of the development of the Vision, details of which will be published within the Vision and Atlas documents, as outlined at the beginning of this report.

## **5.11 Environmental Impact**

5.11.1 The Vision is centred around protecting and enhancing the Welsh Harp and its environs, as such the impact on the environment from the Vision and its associated Action Plan would be positive rather than negative.

5.11.2 The Atlas holds a raft of data and information on the history of the Welsh Harp and its diverse ecology. However, it is recognised that an updated set of surveys will be essential in order to provide an accurate baseline and to measure and track improvements to the area.

5.11.3 In parallel the council will be developing a new Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and Biodiversity Strategy that will support the delivery of the Action Plan within the Vision.

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## **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

7.1 [Environment and Climate Change Committee – 9 June 2022 – Agenda Item 9, Parks and Open Spaces Update](#)