



THE BARR BEACON TRUST MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



REPORT TO COUNCIL 2010/11

Annual Council – 23 May 2011

1.0 Summary of report

This report sets out the work of the management committee for 2010/11 and includes details of significant external funding bids and improvement works to date.

2.0 Recommendation

That the report be noted.

3.0 Background information

- 3.1 Barr Beacon is an easily recognised and well used landmark in Walsall and the Black Country, has strong local heritage significance and is a site of ecological importance for nature conservation due to its range of habitats and the wide variety of species that it supports. The land was conveyed to trustees in 1918 essentially to provide and maintain open space for the benefit of the local community and to keep in repair the War memorial. Walsall Council became trustee following Local Government reorganisation in 1972.
- 3.2 The Council, as trustee, has established a Management Committee in order to deal with the regular administration of the Trusts affairs subject to the Trust being kept informed of the work of the management committee by way of an annual report.
- 3.3 The Management Committee comprises the Ward Councillors for the Pheasey Park Farm and Streetly Wards, being the Wards where the site is located; and Cabinet Members whose portfolio includes Leisure and Regeneration. Local interest groups were invited to be co-opted onto the committee in a non-voting capacity and a representative of the Walsall Civic Society has so far been co-opted, other co-optative trustees are being sought.

4.0 The work of the Management Committee

4.1 *The Heritage Lottery Fund Application*

Much of the work over recent months has focussed on progressing the community involvement aspect of the project which has included the delivery

of three events. These included a “Beacon Wonderland” event in December, 2010, “Meteor Watch” events and “Bands on the Beacon”, which served to demonstrate the variety of activities that could take place on and around the site. All events were well publicised and well attended with over 500 people attending the Christmas event. The local Collingwood Community Centre in Pheasey has played a major part in hosting the events. Future initiatives between the Centre and the Beacon are being planned, including festivals, concerts and contributing to the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Celebrations.

The Committee has viewed a short video “Raising the Barr” which has been produced by the Council’s in-house Creative Development Team and Countryside Services officers and presented by the Chair of Barr Beacon Trust. The video encapsulates Barr Beacon and the aims and objectives of the project; and serves as a promotional tool. The video will be made available to view on the Council’s website. Wider publication methods are also being considered. A more detailed production is proposed as part of the main HLF submission.

The majority of the grant funded work is nearing completion as well as the schedule of works for the restoration of the Heritage features. Proposals for the production of an interactive learning resource, development of a smart phone “App” and a review of interpretive provision are being looked at, including the installation of a solar panel audio system.

As part of the promotional activities, the Committee suggested a postcard competition with prizes for entries posted from furthest afield. This closed on 31 March and the winning postcard was sent from New Zealand. The first prize was a free years membership donated by the Wildlife Trust for Birmingham & Black Country.

4.2 ***Other Work***

The Committee has supported Countryside Services in the management of the site and will be looking at the possibility of transferring the existing Countryside Stewardship Scheme into the latest Environmental Stewardship Scheme. This could bring greater stability to the grant funded management of the site.

The Black Country Geological Society has provided displays and a series of leaflets on the geology of Barr Beacon and local nature reserve handbooks.

The Committee has responded to proposed action to address the effects of the recent roadway collapse in order to minimise disruption; and has responded to Severn Trent Water in respect of works required to the reservoir, again to minimise disruption.

All activities have fulfilled Public Benefit requirements.

4.3 ***Vandalism to the Memorial***

Vandalism, and particularly theft of the copper off the roof of the Memorial, continues to be a problem, however, Council officers are continuing to provide support and provide short term measures whilst permanent repairs are being organised.

5.0 **Accounts**

5.1 The Management Committee has received a finance report at each meeting and can report as follows.

5.2 The Trust currently holds 24,251.44 COIF income shares with a current market value of around £248,640 which are held as a long term investment. COIF charities investment fund has a highly diversified and well-balanced spread of investment designed to help meet growth and income requirements of charities. Current market conditions have seen the value of the shares stabilise and gradually increase. The investment provides an annual income of approximately £10,000 based on current dividends being paid.

5.3 Whilst retaining a capital balance to provide an annual income, the Trust will be allocating the majority of its funds to the Heritage Lottery Fund project and will be supporting bids to other external funding streams.

5.4 The annual income is used to support the day to day maintenance of the site.

6.0 **Annual Return**

The annual return and statement of accounts required by the Charity Commission has been completed and returned.

7.0 **Charity Commission**

The committee has been kept informed of developments in Charity administration through regular updates from the Charity Commission.

8.0 **Conclusion**

Over the past year, the committee has worked closely with Council officers to make and plan improvements to the site and has recognised the significant contribution that the Council makes to maintain the open space and to support its future development. The committee looks forward to continuing this partnership in the coming year to ensure that the site remains an asset for the community to enjoy.



Signed: Councillor Adrian Andrew
Chairman

On behalf of the committee:
Councillors Andrew; Bird; Clarke; Douglas-Maul; Harris; E. Hughes; Towe

Contact officer: Helen Owen, Constitutional Services Officer
01922 652017 owenh@walsall.gov.uk